

**ASSESSING THE TRANSITION
IN AFGHANISTAN**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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ASSESSING THE TRANSITION IN AFGHANISTAN

THURSDAY, JULY 11, 2013

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:02 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Robert Menendez (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Senators Menendez, Cardin, Casey, Murphy, Kaine, Corker, Risch, and Johnson.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ, U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW JERSEY

The CHAIRMAN. Good morning. This hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, "Assessing the Transition in Afghanistan," will come to order.

Today's hearing on Afghanistan comes none too soon. With 63,000 U.S. troops still based there and the upcoming political and security transitions in 2014 just around the corner, now is the time to take stock of our efforts and make any necessary changes. Most importantly, given recent speculation about our intentions, this means the United States needs to make clear once again that we are committed to a long-term partnership with Afghanistan. Period.

Let me be clear because I believe this is a fundamental point. As long as the Afghan people and their government want the United States as a partner, we do not intend to leave Afghanistan. Our goal, our clear intent is to stay committed with both security and civilian assistance post-2014.

I am fully aware that there is a deep-seated anxiety in the region about what the U.S. troop presence will look like post-2014. I heard it firsthand when I was in Afghanistan and Pakistan earlier this year, and I know Senator Corker heard it on his travels to the region just last week.

As President Obama has said repeatedly, the United States is planning on leaving behind a United States force presence to support the Afghan security forces if the Afghan Government wants it. But we need a workable bilateral security agreement acceptable to the United States. President Karzai must now decide whether his government is willing to accept a longer term U.S. troop presence by coming back to the negotiating table with acceptable terms. The ball is in his court, but he and the Afghan people should under-

stand that if we fail to reach an agreement, it will not be for lack of trying on America's end.

For our part, I believe that President Obama should signal to the Afghans and our allies what the post-2014 U.S. troop presence will look like governed by a security agreement. The lack of clarity on this point has led to too much hedging in the region. Afghans who may otherwise be interested in building a fledgling democracy want to know that they will not be abandoned by the United States as the Taliban claims they will be.

These are the very Afghan allies we need, those committed to democracy, people like Lt. Islam Bibi, the most senior Afghan female police officer in Helmand province who survived three death attempts by her own brother for enlisting and who was tragically shot dead last week by assailants. Afghans like her are counting on us to support a successful and inclusive political transition next year so that the country does not return to civil war.

So I want to reiterate that from my perspective, the ball is in President Karzai's hands, and I hope he does not think that this is a question of simply leverage for him. If he does, then he is sadly mistaken.

The other most important piece of this puzzle is getting the 2014 elections right because ultimately it is the political transition that will determine whether we have a successful security and economic transition.

I am very pleased that Senate Resolution 151 that I sponsored with Senators Casey and McCain passed this week urging the Afghan Government to ensure transparent and credible elections. Many of us here in Congress are concerned that the window for establishing a successful election framework for next April's vote is closing. There is little time left to get a credible preelection process off the ground. Delays in approving new electoral laws and new appointments to the Independent Election Commission, Complaints Commission, and Supreme Court could undermine the entire process. Afghan political stakeholders must come together and agree to fair rules governing the elections to ensure that the process and outcome is accepted by all parties. And now is the time for the United States, the United Nations, and all our allies to speak with one unified voice about what is really at stake here. We must convince the Afghan people that having credible and fair elections on April 5, 2014, is our No. 1 priority in Afghanistan. And President Karzai should understand in clear terms that his legacy of leaving behind a stable Afghanistan that is supported by the international community will be in serious jeopardy with a flawed election outcome.

Already the Obama administration has requested \$3.4 billion in civilian assistance for Afghanistan in 2014, more than it has requested for any other nation, bringing total United States civilian aid to about \$20 billion. But before Congress approves additional funding, we need to know that the Afghan Government is serious about holding credible elections in April 2014 and upholding the reform commitments it made in Tokyo last year.

Congress also needs to hear from the Obama administration about how it is addressing serious problems raised by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction. Though many of

our aid programs have helped raise the quality of life for many Afghans, some of them are ironically working against our collective interests. I am baffled, for instance, that the Pentagon purchased about 800 million dollars' worth of aircraft, including 30 Russian helicopters, when the Afghan air unit lacks basic capacity to operate them. I am also skeptical about some of our INL programs relating to counternarcotics and rule of law efforts in Afghanistan and have asked SIGAR to fully investigate if our multibillion dollar investments in this area make sense.

As we draw down in Afghanistan and move to third-party monitoring of our civilian assistance programs, this committee wants assurances from the State Department, USAID, and Defense Department that they are making real oversight reforms as laid out by SIGAR and others and are making oversight a priority during and after the transition. With billions of dollars at stake, we cannot afford to keep doing business as usual.

There are a lot more areas I would like to cover, including Pakistan's role in the transition and whether we have made lasting security gains, but for now, let me save that for the questions and answers and turn to my distinguished ranking colleague, Senator Corker, who has just returned from the region, for his own opening statements.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BOB CORKER,
U.S. SENATOR FROM TENNESSEE**

Senator CORKER. Mr. Chairman, thank you for calling this hearing. And I do want to say that I appreciate working with you. I think that it has always been the hope that foreign policy and partisanship dissipate at the shoreline. And I think the way we work together on this committee has demonstrated that, and I very much appreciate your comments. I am going to take a slightly different take, but I think your concerns about Afghanistan and Pakistan are similar. And I look forward to working with you as we try to craft policies. And I thank you for doing that on Syria.

With that, I want to thank the witnesses today, both the first and second panels. We have a little bit of an issue that has arisen that is going to be brewing next week, and at 11 o'clock I am likely to have to depart. But I know that we had a classified briefing earlier this week, and we have had a chance to talk with you all as well. I know the second panel is made up of people that I very much respect, and if I miss you, I apologize.

But I want to say that this last week I spent a good part of a day in south Waziristan and saw the roadways that we are building with U.S. dollars, the dams that we are building with U.S. dollars, the transmission lines that we are building with U.S. dollars in an area that was, let us face it, not very long ago the center of al-Qaeda activities. And I saw the benefits of that. There is no question that bringing civilization to that part of the world and the chance for economic growth certainly changes the dynamic. And so I want to applaud—I know the chairman was involved in that and others have been too.

On the other hand, as Admiral Mullen testified here 2 years ago, we know, for a fact, that the ISI, the intelligence arm of the Pakistani military, is helping coordinate directly activities with the

Haqqani network in Afghanistan in conducting high profile activities that are designed to kill and maim Americans and destabilize the country. And we know that.

And I say to the two of you—you have a difficult job. It is complex. But we have got to rectify that problem. And as we move ahead with looking at aid, I have a feeling the chairman is going to be looking at those issues in a similar light. But we have got to rectify this bipolar activity that is taking place that is not in our U.S. interest.

Now, Pakistan has security problems within the country. Candidly, down the road I have a feeling we are going to be worried about Pakistan being a stable country and a country with a lot of nuclear weapons on mobile launchers. Certainly that is a problem.

But let me move to Afghanistan, and I am going to say some things that are a little bit out of my character but I am going to say them. Look, I think that everybody knows over the next 6 months, actually between now and April, it is a very important time in Afghanistan. The bilateral agreement we know needs to be done by October, and I know that you all are working toward that end. And I know that you know the election being free and fair, generally speaking per Afghanistan standards, is something that is very important and I know that there are people there on the ground both on the Afghan side and our side trying to make that happen.

This administration, though, has tremendous difficulty making decisions. This administration has multiple voices within it that keep it from having clarity. And I have to tell you, as the chairman mentioned, I think the administration has got to quit looking at its navel and make a decision on what the force structure is going to be in Afghanistan. Our allies are going to have difficulty planning and provisioning if we wait much longer. Capital outflows out of Afghanistan are increasing dramatically which is causing the economy to be less than it could because we have yet to state what we are going to do, generally speaking, as it relates to force structure. And I know that we will not do anything if we do not end up with a bilat—agreement.

But I think the fact is that we have got to go ahead and tell our allies, tell the people in Afghanistan what we are going to do, generally speaking, as it relates to force structure. And I am telling you this continued looking at our navel, trying to make a decision, having competing forces at the White House is hurting us. It is hurting our efforts in Afghanistan. It is hurting our military and it is hurting our allies.

Now, Karzai. Karzai is the most frustrating world leader we have probably dealt with in a long time. He is irrational. It is hard to believe that he believes the things that he believes. But he truly believes today that we are in cahoots with Pakistan and trying to destabilize the country, as crazy as that is. The fact that we have spent hundreds of billions of dollars there, we have lost American lives and limbs, and the fact that he today believes that somehow or another we are coordinating with Pakistan to destabilize it is almost beyond belief. But the reason he does is because he knows the first fact that I just mentioned and that we have noticed here in this committee for a long time.

I think he also believes—I do not think he believes this with all his heart. I think he thinks—I do not believe this, by the way, and I want to make this clear to anybody listening. I do not believe this. I think he believes there are some people within the administration that because of previous political issues, almost want Afghanistan to fail. I do not. He is a strange person.

I will say—and this is a minor detail—I think we have helped create the kind of relationship that we have with him. Since no one at the administration will talk with me about some of the questions I have asked about our support of him personally, I would not be surprised if we were supporting him personally prior to him even being President of Afghanistan. But I think we have helped create a monster here.

So I would just say to the two of you, that you have a tough job. I am not speaking to you specifically as I say this, I am speaking to the administration. I know that we have a tough and difficult and frustrating person to deal with on this bilateral agreement, but I hope that this administration is not going to personalize it. I know that Karzai has embarrassed the President publicly by talking about the fact that he believes that he is working with Pakistan to destabilize the country, and I know that we have a lot of problems with Karzai. I am asking this administration to look beyond Karzai—he is going to be gone in April—to look at our national interests, to make some decisions with clarity and show some world leadership and do the things that we need to do as a nation to support these outstanding men and women in uniform that have sacrificed life and limb, the taxpayers that have sacrificed precious dollars and move on with this. I am very, very frustrated with this administration and its lack of ability to lead on this issue and to provide clarity.

I hope your testimony helps us with that. I look forward to working with you. I thank you for being public servants. I know it is a frustrating job, but it is time to move on this issue.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Corker.

With that, let me turn to our witnesses and thank them for their participation today. On our first panel, we have the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Jim Dobbins, and Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs, Dr. Peter Lavoy.

And let me note that while Ambassador Dobbins has only been on this particular job for 2 months, he was the first senior American civilian into Afghanistan back in 2001 and raised the flag over the newly reopened U.S. Embassy in Kabul. So he is no stranger to the region.

We look forward to your testimony. We ask you to summarize it in about 5 minutes or so so we can have a question and answer session. Your entire statements will be included in the record. And with that, Ambassador Dobbins.

STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES DOBBINS, SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC

Ambassador DOBBINS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Corker. Thanks for giving both Peter Lavoy and

me an opportunity to appear before you, and thank you for your constructive opening remarks and your advice which we will certainly take to heart and make sure others in the administration are aware of.

As you noted, I have only been in my current position for a couple of months, having come back essentially to the same job I had 12 years ago with respect to Afghanistan just after 9/11. And this may give me a somewhat different perspective than those of you who have been following Afghanistan from day to day.

I know we tend to look at the efficacy of our efforts in Afghanistan day to day, project by project, measuring it largely in terms of inputs and outputs. But the true measure of our efforts in Afghanistan is not either what we put into it or the direct outputs, but rather the outcomes. The best measure of education assistance is not schools built or even students instructed, but literacy rates. The best measure of health assistance is not the number of hospitals built or even patients treated, but increases in longevity. Of course, it takes a long time to measure outcomes like this, but we have been in Afghanistan and helping Afghanistan for a long time now.

By measures of this sort, outcome measures, and on the basis of some research that I completed with some colleagues at RAND just a few months before taking up my current job, I believe Afghanistan may actually be the most successful international effort at reconstruction in a conflict or post-conflict country over the last quarter century.

In a study that we did at the RAND Corporation, we looked at 20 cases over the last 25 years where there were civil and military interventions in a conflict or post-conflict environment. This included all the big United States efforts in Somalia and Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq and about a dozen smaller U.N. and other efforts of this sort. And we tried to measure the outcomes in these efforts over a 10-year period using statistics and indices that were kept by Freedom House, the IMF, the World Bank, and UNDP.

Afghanistan rated quite high on most of those indexes, but rather remarkably in the category of human development, it showed the best rate of improvement of all 20 of these countries. The human development is an index kept by UNDP and it measures a combination of health, education, and standard of living outcomes. And as I said, Afghanistan rated top of all 20.

Now, this is not just because it was the poorest to start with because some of the others were actually poorer. And it is not just because it got a lot of assistance because a couple of the others actually got more assistance on a per capita basis.

What does this mean in practical terms? In Afghanistan, it means life expectancy has gone from 44 years to 60 years, and that is in a country that is still at civil war.

What does it mean in terms of literacy? It means that Afghanistan has gone from having the worst rate of literacy in the entire world, maybe 15 percent back in 2001, to 33 percent literacy today and to 60 percent literacy by 2025, if the kids that are in school today stay in school.

It means going from one TV station that was owned by the government to 75 nearly all independent TV stations.

It means going from 40,000 telephones to 18 million telephones. It means cell phone coverage going from 0 to 90 percent of the country.

These are pretty remarkable outcomes. In fact, taken as a whole, they may be unmatched outcomes in a conflict or post-conflict society.

Now, this is a pivotal time. NATO and the United States are transitioning from a combat to an advisory and assistance role. As I think both of you stressed, the United States is committed to continuing to support a fully sovereign, democratic, and united Afghanistan. We do not intend to repeat the mistakes we made in the 1980s and 1990s. As the Afghans stand up, they will not stand alone. We remain committed to a long-term strategic partnership with the Afghan Government and the Afghan people.

As the President said in January, along with President Karzai, the United States has two goals: Number one, to train, assist, and advise Afghan forces so they can maintain Afghanistan's security; and number two, making sure that we can continue to go after remnants of al-Qaeda or its affiliates.

At the NATO defense ministerial this year in June, NATO allies and partners endorsed a detailed concept of the new mission for Afghanistan after 2014.

Regarding the number of American troops to remain in Afghanistan—that is to say, the number of troops that would remain 18 months from now—the President is still reviewing his options. We are, at the same time, continuing our conversation with the Afghans about how we can carry out those missions. We have made significant progress on the text of a new bilateral security agreement. Of course, without an agreement on our presence in Afghanistan, we would not remain, but we do not believe that that is the likely outcome of these negotiations.

Unlike Iraq to which comparisons are often made, the Afghans actually need us to stay. Most Afghans want us to stay, and we have promised to stay. None of these three things were true in Iraq, and all of these three things are true with respect to Afghanistan.

While we continue to help Afghans take responsibility for their own security, we are also continuing to support an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned reconciliation process designed to find a political solution to conflict with the Taliban. At the same time, we must be clear that our main priority for the coming year is neither the military transition nor the reconciliation process, but rather the political transition that will occur when Afghan people choose a new President and a new President takes office next year. The future stability of Afghanistan rests on the peaceful transition of political authority in the course of 2014, and if this occurs, then I believe these other problems and challenges will resolve themselves quite satisfactorily.

The first steps in this process is already underway, and we will continue to work with the Afghan Government to support their electoral process and achieve a successful and unifying political transition.

Like any developing country emerging from conflict, Afghanistan will require international support for some time. We should, however, recognize that a country that a little more than a decade ago provided a haven from which the 9/11 attacks were planned has already become a staunch partner in the fight against international terrorism. There is much the Afghan people can be proud of, and we can be proud of, in the work we have done over the last decade and more.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Dobbins follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR JAMES F. DOBBINS

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Corker, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the progress of U.S. efforts in Afghanistan.

Although I have been in my current position for less than 2 months, I did briefly occupy a similar position nearly 12 years ago, when, in the aftermath of 9/11, I was appointed the Bush administration's first special envoy for Afghanistan. In that capacity I represented the United States in the early diplomacy after 9/11 which led to the Bonn Conference and the establishment of an interim government in Afghanistan. The Bonn Conference set in motion the political process that produced a new constitution for Afghanistan and its first democratically elected government.

Afghanistan is a remarkably changed place in 2013 as compared to 2001. In 2001, fewer than 900,000 children—almost all boys—were in school. Today, that number is 8 million, more than one-third of whom are girls. Life expectancy has soared from 44 years in 2001 to over 60 today. While maternal mortality rates remain too high in Afghanistan, women and children are far more likely to survive childbirth than they were 11 years ago. In 2001, Afghanistan had one state-run television station. Today, the media landscape is among the region's freest and most vibrant, with over 45 percent of Afghans owning televisions and 75 television stations and 175 radio stations available. Afghans are more connected than ever with more than 18 million active cell phone subscribers and a combined phone network that covers 90 percent of the population. Remarkably, 80 percent of Afghan women have access to a cell phone today.

To understand the significance of these types of changes, it is useful to put them in a broader perspective. A study I published with colleagues at the RAND Corporation just before taking this position looked at the 20 major post-cold-war civil-military interventions conducted by the United States, the United Nations, and others in conflict and post-conflict states. The study compared outcomes in those countries over the 10 years after each intervention. We found that Afghanistan—even though it was one of only four of the 20 countries still experiencing violent conflict—had by far the greatest improvement of all 20 in its Human Development Index score (measured by the United Nations Development Program), the second-greatest cumulative growth in per capita gross domestic product (based on International Monetary Fund data), and the third-best improvement in its government effectiveness score (measured by the World Bank).

The Human Development Index is an especially useful indicator of Afghanistan's advancement. It is a composite measure of socioeconomic well-being that takes account of health, education, and income. Since 2001, Afghanistan's Human Development Index score has improved faster than the world average, the South Asia regional average, and the average for countries with low human development. These objective advancements in Afghanistan cannot be explained simply by the low base from which progress has been made since 2001. Several of the other 20 countries we studied were poorer to begin with and improved less rapidly over 10 years after intervention. Nor are these improvements just a manifestation of international aid, as Afghanistan was not the largest foreign aid recipient of the 20 countries on a per capita basis. These changes are real and can be expected to be durable.

Afghanistan is still, of course, a poor country, and one that has suffered decades of conflict; it has a long way yet to go in its political and economic development. No society, whether it has been affected by conflict or not, can be lifted out of poverty, cleansed of corruption, and endowed with fully effective and resilient institutions in the short span of a decade. This is why it is most useful to assess progress against a realistic set of expectations.

In this light, the outcomes produced by American, Afghan, and coalition efforts have been impressive, and color the prospects for Afghanistan's future in many ways. Crucially, the people of Afghanistan now have a strong interest in seeing the improvements in their country sustained and even further advanced. Hopes and expectations have risen for peace, for economic development, and for what the government delivers to the people. Afghanistan will not return to the conditions of 2001 as the U.S. role shifts in line with the transition processes and shifts in the security realm to supporting and assisting the Afghans.

I am pleased to once again be working to advance U.S. efforts in a now vastly changed Afghanistan. This is a pivotal time: NATO and the United States are transitioning from a combat to an advisory and assistance role in Afghanistan; Afghan authorities are assuming responsibility for their country's security; and, most importantly for Afghanistan's future stability, next year's Presidential election presents an opportunity for the first transfer of power from one freely elected government to another in the country's history.

Fifteen months ago, speaking at Bagram Air Base, President Obama discussed the five lines of effort that underpin U.S. policy in Afghanistan, all of which we continue to pursue: (1) successfully implementing the 2014 security, economic, and political transition; (2) strengthening the Afghan National Security Forces; (3) building a strong partnership with Afghanistan; (4) supporting an Afghan peace process; and (5) enhancing regional cooperation. The steady commitment of the United States, and the sacrifices the American people have made in lives and treasure, have resulted in progress in Afghanistan that is both significant and likely to endure.

Against this backdrop our partnership with Afghanistan has continued to mature. The United States is committed to continuing to support a fully sovereign, democratic, and united Afghanistan. We have been clear in public and in private, as have many of our allies and partners in ISAF and in the broader international community, that we do not intend to repeat the mistakes of the 1980s and 1990s and that as the Afghans stand up, they won't stand alone. Through our Strategic Partnership Agreement, our robust civilian assistance within the mutual accountability framework, and our support to the ANSF, we remain committed to a long-term strategic partnership with the Afghan Government and the Afghan people.

As the President said in January with President Karzai, the United States has two goals: Number one, to train, assist, and advise Afghan forces so that they can maintain their own security; and number two, making sure that we can continue to go after remnants of al-Qaeda or other affiliates that might threaten our homeland. That is a very limited mission, and it is not one that would require the same kind of footprint, obviously, that we've had over the last 10 years in Afghanistan.

At the NATO Defense Ministers meeting on 5 June, NATO allies and partners endorsed a detailed concept of the new mission for Afghanistan after 2014.

With respect to troop numbers, the President is still reviewing a range of options from his national security team and has not made a decision about the size of a U.S. military presence after 2014.

We are continuing our conversations with the Afghans on how we can carry out those missions and have made significant progress on the text of a Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA). Before the suspension of the last round of negotiations by President Karzai, we felt we were nearing the completion of the technical aspects in the BSA and were very pleased with the productive negotiations to develop an agreement that served both countries' interest. Since the suspension, we continue to make clear that we remain prepared to negotiate and conclude the BSA. Of course without such an agreement, there could be no such presence, but we do not believe that the likely outcome of these negotiations.

To bolster our partnership, over the past 2 years we have undertaken an active diplomatic campaign to rally regional and international support for Afghanistan through what we call the Transformation Decade after 2014. From Lisbon to Bonn to Chicago to Tokyo, the international community, together with Afghanistan, has built a framework that will help support Afghanistan through this formative period. A year ago, we agreed at Tokyo to put the relationship between Afghanistan and its partners on a foundation of mutual accountability; to pursue continued political, economic, and social development; and to support a secure, stable, democratic, and prosperous Afghanistan.

The Afghan Government and donors met in Kabul last week for frank conversations focused on priority actions that were specified in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework and that are required to achieve our shared goals. These actions include ensuring inclusive, transparent, and credible Presidential and provincial council elections next year; respecting and upholding human rights commitments, especially maintaining and improving the rights of women; combating corruption;

transitioning from a donor-driven to private sector-led economy; improving governance; and ensuring continued development.

We know that Afghanistan takes seriously the reform commitments made in Tokyo last year. These Tokyo commitments reflect Afghanistan's sincere desire to achieve self-sufficiency and economic sovereignty. In Kabul last week, we urged the Afghan Government to continue to press for the legislation and regulations required to strengthen electoral institutions, combat corruption, and facilitate economic growth. We also discussed the need to further improve the way international assistance is delivered. As part of our broader effort to enhance Afghan capacity and increase Afghan accountability, we continue to work hard with our Afghan partners to increase the amount of direct assistance provided through the Afghan Government. This decision reflects our bilateral commitments to align our programming with Afghan priorities as well as our strategic desire to strengthen the Afghan state and promote Afghanistan's sustainable development.

At the same time, in order to further encourage the Afghan Government to meet agreed goals, the United States announced on July 3 the establishment of a new \$175 million bilateral incentive program to encourage progress on the full range of Tokyo reforms. The United States plans to set aside up to \$75 million in incentive funding available this year, and up to an additional \$100 million of planned funding available next year. The new program will promote Afghan reform progress with flexible funding to be used for development projects or other needs prioritized by the Afghan Government. But the funds will only be available if specific and concrete progress is made toward the Tokyo goals, including on elections, anticorruption, and women's rights. We look forward to further discussions with the Afghan Government on how we can best implement this new incentive program to promote the reforms, which we agree are critical to Afghanistan's future.

Over the last year the United States has reoriented its civilian assistance programs to better support Afghan needs during the upcoming transitions and to maximize sustainability. The revised program being put in place now focuses on maintaining the social gains of the last decade (focusing on health, education, and women's rights), building the civilian capacity of the Afghan Government, and mitigating the negative economic impact of troop withdrawal. The new strategy takes into account input from the Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction and other inspectors general, and will consolidate programming along key economic corridors, phase out stabilization programs, decrease spending on new infrastructure, and focus on building capacity to maintain prior investments. While new spending in the infrastructure sector will focus on commercializing existing services and building Afghan capacity to maintain and operate existing infrastructure, we will continue to support completion of existing projects proposed under the Afghanistan Infrastructure Fund (AIF). The AIF will not be used to support new projects that would further increase the future financial burden on the Afghan Government. The Department of State, USAID and DOD are working closely together to ensure that Afghan ministries have the necessary capacity and authorities to sustainably maintain these investments in the future.

While our bilateral assistance is an important part of our economic relationship, we have also endeavored to promote economic cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbors. We believe that the best way to enable the Afghan people to achieve sustained economic progress beyond 2014 is to enable this increased regional connectivity—to help the countries of the region dismantle trade barriers, promote investment, and support the development of regional energy, transportation, and communications links. This is at the very heart of the New Silk Road vision. Our support for the Istanbul Process, in particular, promotes a regionally led effort to build trust and regional leadership post-2014.

My colleague Peter Lavoy will speak in more detail about the progress we and our Afghan partners have made in developing the Afghan National Security Forces over the past 2 years and what we are doing together to ensure continued progress, but I want to highlight a few important points on these issues.

We are in the final stages of transition to Afghan lead for security, realizing commitments that we, our allies, and Afghanistan made at Lisbon in 2010 and reaffirmed at Chicago last year. On June 18, we marked the milestone of transition to full Afghan lead for security and ISAF's shift from combat operations to support of the Afghan National Security Forces. In concert with reaching the milestone, President Karzai announced the fifth and final stage of transition to full Afghan lead on security throughout the country, which will begin later this summer and put us on track to complete a process begun 2 years ago. While the Taliban remain capable of staging dramatic attacks, Afghan forces are demonstrating their growing capabilities during this fighting season, taking on the Taliban across Afghanistan even as ISAF forces gradually leave the field. But as our forces pull back, we remain

committed to ensuring that the ANSF is as strong as it can be. We continue to train ANSF units and improve the capacity of the security ministries, a mission that will last beyond 2014 as part of NATO's longer term train, advise, and assist plans. And as we work with the Afghans to build a stronger ANSF, we will also partner with them on our post-2014 counterterrorism mission that will prevent al-Qaeda from again using Afghanistan as a safe haven.

While helping the Afghans take responsibility for their own security, we are also working to support an Afghan-led reconciliation process designed to find a political solution to conflict with the Taliban. To that end, in January, President Obama and President Karzai called for the establishment of an office in Doha for the purpose of enabling negotiations between the Afghan High Peace Council and authorized representatives of the Taliban. We appreciate the efforts of the Government of Qatar to encourage this process, and the public statements of support from the international community, including Pakistan and others. We are appreciative of Pakistan's efforts to further Afghan-led reconciliation, including Pakistan's call to Taliban leaders and insurgents to join talks with the High Peace Council. We continue to encourage consultations between the Afghan and Pakistani Governments in support of reconciliation efforts.

Talking peace means talking to your enemy. The first steps are always hard, and a final settlement may be a long time coming. Our goal remains for Afghans to be talking to Afghans about how they can move forward, end the violence, and continue rebuilding their country. From the start, we have made clear that, as part of any outcome, the Taliban and other insurgent groups must end violence, break ties with international terrorism, and accept the Afghan Constitution, including its protections for women and minorities. We have also made clear that while the United States will try to help facilitate a peace process, negotiations about the future of Afghanistan must be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned.

We will continue to work to promote a peace process, but this cannot distract from the main priority in the coming year—the political transition that will occur when the Afghan people choose a new President next April. I cannot stress enough the importance of a successful and democratic political transition next year and, as an essential part of that, a credible and timely election process that reflects the will of the Afghan people. Next April's election will be a momentous occasion in Afghanistan's national history. The future stability of Afghanistan rests on a peaceful transition of political authority from President Karzai to his successor in 2014 through an election that Afghans themselves accept as credible. Afghans know that inclusive elections are critical to their country's stability, as well as to sustaining international commitments to Afghanistan.

The first steps in the process have already been taken. We urge the Afghan Government and Parliament to take the next critical steps and pass electoral legislation that provides for appointments of electoral officials and an independent complaints process, and for President Karzai to sign them into law, as he has promised to do, in order to ensure the credibility of the elections processes. A successful and unifying political transition based on a transparent, inclusive, free, and fair election will reaffirm to the Afghan people and the international community that Afghanistan's commitment to democracy, peace, and prosperity remains strong and unwavering.

The Afghans have already taken significant steps to prepare for this historic process. The Independent Election Commission (IEC) has created a timeline for the elections, designed a public education campaign for voters, and developed a comprehensive operational plan to combat fraud and expand participation, including of women. Political leaders have been meeting to clarify a common understanding of how elections should be conducted, who should run and on what platform, and how to ensure that influential political factions respect the result. It is encouraging that Afghans understand that nothing will strengthen Afghanistan more than an election that serves to unify their country. I want to reaffirm that the United States will not endorse any single party or candidate. However, we along with the international community will be paying close attention to the election process as it unfolds. We will continue to encourage all political figures to play a positive and unifying role, irrespective of their differences, to help ensure a transparent, peaceful, and democratic political process that fulfills the aspirations of Afghans. The Afghan people deserve nothing less given their sacrifices over the past three decades.

We are providing significant financial and program assistance to help Afghans build credible and independent electoral institutions. In doing so, we emphasize the importance of expanding voter participation, particularly for women, and of ensuring the independence of the election commission, as well as the need for an independent complaints commission and consultative procedures for selecting commissioners. We are engaging intensively with Afghan officials, civil society, and political

leaders to support their efforts to establish effective elections processes. We also are coordinating closely with the U.N. and with other donors on training, public information campaigns, fraud mitigation, domestic observation efforts, and improved ways to identify eligible voters.

The U.S. Government provided \$179 million in assistance for 2009–2013 for programs focusing on effective voter registration, civic and voter education, electoral reform and legislation, and expanding political participation. For the 2014 Presidential and provincial council elections, USAID plans to contribute an additional \$110 million. Of this amount, about \$75 million directly supports the UNDP–ELECT project working with the two main Afghan electoral bodies, the Independent Election Commission (IEC) and the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC). An additional \$15–20 million has been budgeted to assist civil society actors that are stakeholders in the democratic process (e.g., women’s groups, media, youth, political party capacity-building, and election observers). For the 2015 parliamentary election USAID is budgeting additional funding for democratic stakeholders that has yet to be determined.

Afghanistan has made impressive progress since 2001. Afghanistan is freer and more prosperous, people are better educated, healthier, and enjoy much greater economic opportunity. Like any developing country emerging from conflict, Afghanistan will require international support for some time, but Afghans are determined to stand up. A country that a little more than a decade ago provided the haven from which the 9/11 attacks were planned has become a staunch partner against international terrorism. There is much the Afghan people can be proud of, and we can be proud to stand at their side, working together to ensure that these tremendous accomplishments are not reversed.

Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I look forward to your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Ambassador.
Dr. Lavoy.

STATEMENT OF DR. PETER R. LAVOY, ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR ASIAN AND PACIFIC SECURITY AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, WASHINGTON, DC

Dr. LAVOY. Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Corker, and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to discuss with you today the present status and future course of our military engagement in Afghanistan. It is an honor to be here with Ambassador Dobbins to discuss both the significant progress we are making and the very real challenges we continue to face in the country.

Our fundamental objectives in Afghanistan have not changed. Our goal remains to deny safe havens to al-Qaeda and its affiliates and to deny the Taliban the ability to overthrow the Afghan Government. Over the past 4 years, due to the dedication, hard work, and sacrifices of our forces, our coalition partners, and the Afghan security forces and population, we have made significant progress in advancing those objectives.

Today the Afghan people have greater economic opportunity and greater access to health care, better and more education, and more freedoms and individual rights, especially for women, than ever before. As committed to in Chicago last year and reaffirmed at the Presidential summit this January, the Afghan National Security Forces, or ANSF, last month took the lead countrywide for providing security to the people of Afghanistan.

This important milestone also signaled a shift in the International Security Assistance Forces’ primary mission from combat to assisting the ANSF. The combat leadership shift from ISAF to ANSF demonstrates the capability and resolve of the Afghan Army and police to secure their people and their nation. It also enables the United States and other ISAF nations to continue reducing the

presence of their combat forces. The 2013 security milestone and final tranche of the transition process will mark the fulfillment of the pledges our leaders made in Lisbon and Chicago.

The ANSF are being tested this fighting season but are performing admirably. Afghan forces now plan and conduct the overwhelming majority of combat operations and are also taking the vast majority of casualties. However, despite heavy fighting, the Afghans are holding the gains of recent years and the Taliban must come to grips with the fact that they cannot defeat the Afghan National Security Forces militarily.

The United States is transitioning in Afghanistan, not leaving. We are on track to bring the ISAF mission to a close by the end of 2014 and transition to Operation Resolute Support, a new train, advise, and assist mission under a NATO umbrella. Beyond this NATO mission, the United States also plans to conduct a narrowly focused counterterrorism mission.

The United States and Afghanistan are already negotiating a bilateral security agreement to provide the necessary framework to support the presence of U.S. forces to accomplish these missions. NATO is also preparing to negotiate such a framework with Afghanistan.

While the United States has not made a decision on the size of the post-2014 military presence, our planning and our ultimate United States presence will be guided by a number of factors to include: progress toward our core goal of defeating al-Qaeda in the region; second, the potential for peace talks between the Afghan Government and the Taliban; third, continued progress with the ANSF; fourth, Afghanistan's political transition centered on the elections in April 2014; fifth, the regional setting; and finally, concluding the United States-Afghanistan bilateral security agreement and the NATO-Afghanistan status of forces agreement.

We will keep Congress informed of any post-2014 U.S. presence decisions and developments in other areas such as the BSA.

This is a critical time for our shared effort in Afghanistan. After more than a decade of war and tremendous sacrifices by the people of the United States, our coalition partners, and Afghans, we can see the prospect for peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Thank you for your continuing support to the mission in Afghanistan and to our men and women in uniform, without which none of this would be possible. Thank you and I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Lavoy follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. PETER R. LAVOY

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Corker, and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to testify before you today to discuss the present status and future course of our military engagement in Afghanistan. It's an honor to be here with Ambassador Dobbins to discuss both the progress we are making and the challenges we continue to face.

Our fundamental objectives in Afghanistan have not changed. Our goal remains to deny safe havens to al-Qaeda and its affiliates and to deny the Taliban the ability to overthrow the Afghan Government. Over the past 4 years, due to the dedication and sacrifice of our forces, our coalition partners, and the Afghan security forces and people, we have made significant progress in advancing those objectives.

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The United States is transitioning in Afghanistan, not leaving. We are on track to bring the ISAF mission to a close by the end of 2014, and transition to Operation RESOLUTE SUPPORT, a new train, advise, and assist mission under a NATO umbrella. Beyond this NATO mission, the United States also plans to conduct a narrowly focused counterterrorism mission.

The United States and Afghanistan are already negotiating on a Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) to provide the necessary framework to support the presence of U.S. forces to accomplish these missions. NATO is also preparing to negotiate such a framework with Afghanistan.

While the United States has not made a decision on the size of the post-2014 military presence, our planning and our ultimate U.S. presence will be guided by a number of factors, to include:

- Progress toward our core goal of defeating al-Qaeda in the region;
- The potential for peace talks between the Afghan Government and the Taliban;
- Continued progress with the ANSF;
- Afghan political transition, centered on the elections in April 2014;
- The regional setting; and
- Concluding the U.S.-Afghanistan Bilateral Security Agreement and the NATO-Afghanistan Status of Forces Agreement.

We will keep Congress informed of any post-2014 U.S. presence decisions and developments in other areas such as the Bilateral Security Agreement.

This is a critical time for our shared effort in Afghanistan. After more than a decade of war, and tremendous sacrifices by the people of the United States, our coalition partners, and Afghanistan, we can see the prospect for peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Thank you for your continuing support to the mission in Afghanistan and our men and women in uniform, without which none of this would be possible. I look forward to answering your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, thank you both for your testimony.

There is a lot of ground to cover here, so let me start.

Ambassador Dobbins, we seem to have spent, from my perspective, an enormous amount of time on this reconciliation effort. I am not sure that the Taliban, looking at the Karzai government leaving next year, looking at the reduction of international forces, really believes that it is the right negotiating moment for them.

But the one thing that is very important from my perspective is the elections. And I am trying to understand. We hear very little about our efforts with the elections. We have a witness from our second panel who flew in from Afghanistan, for which we are very grateful, Mr. Ahmad Nader Nadery of the Fair and Free Elections Foundation of Afghanistan. I was reading his testimony. He has a series of items that are critical toward elections that are ultimately fair, transparent, and for which there can be confidence of the Afghan people as we move forward, which in the longer term process is going to be a critical part of any reconciliation effort that, as you described, is led by the Afghans at the end of the day.

What are we doing to ensure these elections are taking place in a successful way? In 2009, we appointed a senior official to coordinate support for the elections at the Embassy in Kabul to signify how important a priority this was for the United States. Why do we not do this again?

Ambassador DOBBINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Well, on the reconciliation issue, I mean, we are determined to move forward on this in lockstep with the Government of Afghanistan. The objective here is not for us to negotiate peace in Afghanistan. The objective is for us to promote an Afghan process, a process between the insurgency and the government and the high peace council of government is formed to address these issues. We do not expect it to progress quickly. We are not sure it will start at all over the next year. And we are certainly not going to let it distract us from these other priorities, as you correctly suggest.

On elections, the United States, through both State and AID financing, is joining a large-scale international effort to fund both the election process in terms of the machinery and also the “get out the vote” type education process that can assist in ensuring that this is a satisfactory election.

I will take aboard the suggestion that somebody at a significantly senior level be appointed specifically for this in the Embassy. That may be helpful. I am sure the Embassy is devoting a great deal of attention to it.

The CHAIRMAN. I do not want to get all the time on the—I know the facts, and I know that we have moneys ascribed.

My problem is I do not get the sense that in our focus in Afghanistan that one of our critical focuses is getting the Afghan Government to make the appointments to the Election Commission, to make the other appointments to the Supreme Court, to create the structure that all the money in the world bringing out to vote will not guarantee unless we have a structure at the end of the day that can have disputes settled in a fair, honest, transparent way.

And so are we engaging through our Embassy there, through the State Department, through your own representation with President Karzai to make it crystal clear that it is very important to make these appointments, that we will look at this as part of our overall assistance? Because from my perspective, if we do not have elections that are fair and transparent, we are going to have a huge challenge in addition to the security question ahead. And I think we have lost sight of that as a major part of what we should be doing.

Ambassador DOBBINS. I agree with you entirely.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, that is not good news. If you agree with me entirely that we have lost sight of it, that is not good news. The question is, How do we change the course here because we are talking about April of next year? That is months away.

Ambassador DOBBINS. I agree with you entirely on the importance, indeed, the priority that is given to this. In fact, I think every time I have spoken to any audience on Afghanistan, I have made clear that among all of the major transitions that are taking place, this is the most critical one.

There are two pieces of legislation that are the critical inputs to creating the Electoral Commission and a Complaints Commission

that are currently in their Parliament. They are moving through their Parliament. They have passed Houses. They are in the process of negotiation between the two Houses. As you know, legislative processes are not subject to, you know, light switch type influence, but the President has said that he will keep the Parliament in session through Ramadan, if necessary, in order to get this legislation out, and he has promised me and he has promised everybody else who has visited, probably Senator Corker, too, when he saw him. He has promised to sign this legislation as soon as it is out.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I think there are appointments to be made. Those appointments are executive powers. We need to see those appointments made. It is not about a legislative process at the end of the day. So I think there are very clear benchmarks here that we are not reaching that ultimately are going to provide a problem for us next April. And I hope that I am wrong, but what we need is a fair and open, transparent election that all parties in Afghanistan can ultimately believe that their future is dictated by an honest election. And if we do not get that, then everything else we are talking about is going to fall apart.

Let me ask Dr. Lavoy. Today the Washington Post in an article says the Afghan army struggles with lack of reach, and it talks about a realization by many commanders that, "part of Afghanistan will probably remain in the enemy's hands." And it talks about the challenges of that Afghan army.

Now, after spending a small fortune in trying to build this army, what are our abilities to help them move in a direction—I have heard all the testimony. I honor their leading the fight and losing lives. But I am looking at what this article and other information suggests, and it seems to me that there are critical gaps here that even the most courageous soldiers in the Afghan army and their commanders are going to face moving forward. Are we looking at how we deal in a support role to helping the Afghans be able to achieve their own security?

Dr. LAVOY. Thank you for that question, Chairman. It is a very important issue.

I think the story of the Afghan National Security Forces is really one of success and really a remarkable success. If you look back 5 or 6 years ago, there were only 70,000 Afghan National Security Forces. Today there is an authorized ceiling of 352,000 forces and an actual amount of somewhere over 340,000. Not only the quantitative change but the qualitative change of this capability, the army and the police, has been amazing. These forces are now, as I said in my prepared remarks, out there leading combat operations throughout the country. They are encountering a lot of resistance. They are taking a lot of casualties, but they are standing up to that resistance. They are an increasingly professional force that is getting the job done and doing a better job each and every day.

You asked, specifically, are there gaps. Yes, there are gaps. Today the Afghan National Army and the police are not totally self-sustainable entities capable of doing everything. We are providing critical support and assistance to them. ISAF is. That enables them to do the jobs. But I think one of the most remarkable features in the last 2 years is the ability for the army and the

police to do more and more of the job themselves. They are increasingly planning operations themselves. They are pulling in intelligence, identifying where adversaries are, identifying threats to populations, and they are going after those threats successfully. They are clearing routes. They are providing for their own enabling capabilities.

Where we find the biggest gaps today is really at the ministerial level, at the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of the Interior where they need critical, basically, support to the army and the police that are out there operating. They need a human capital strategy. They need to manage contracts, payrolls, food, fuel, other logistics, planning, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, et cetera. So as the Afghan army and police are increasingly capable operationally in getting the job done, the focus of our assistance is shifting now to higher echelons and to support that supportive structure.

Now, you specifically asked, Are they capable of getting out to the parts of the country where that is threatened by the insurgency? Afghanistan, as you know, sir—and all of you have been to Afghanistan—is a difficult country to get around. The communication network is not very well established. It is a mountainous country. It is hard to access different places. So that is a challenge for any military force inside Afghanistan to access the remote parts of that country. And that is the challenge that the army and the police will continue to face. We are working with them to improve their mobility so they can get out there, but that will be an enduring challenge that they will face.

The CHAIRMAN. I have followup questions, but I will wait for a second round.

Senator Corker.

Senator CORKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I very much appreciate your line of questioning.

Let me say to the witnesses again I do appreciate your public service. I know that the leader of Afghanistan is a very frustrating individual, and I will say this and you do not have to agree. I know it is also frustrating trying to solve a problem when we have an administration that has such difficulty making a decision and providing clarity. So I know that you guys are whipsawed. I hope that you can help the administration soon have some clarity and make a decision. But I thank you for your work.

Mr. Chairman, you mentioned the election. And I did sit down with the chief election officer there, Mr. Amarkhil, I believe, and I know you have worked with him. And I just want to ask the witnesses, Is there any question that as people begin to hedge their bets because they do not yet know what our force structure is going to be and what kind of commitments we and NATO are going to make—is there any question that the hedging that is taking place, the capital outflows that are occurring works against U.S. interest at present?

Ambassador DOBBINS. I think it is important to reassure Afghans that we are going to be committed to that long-term security, stability, and prosperity. And I think to be fair, we have gone a long way in doing that.

I take your point that more certainty on force levels would be helpful. That is a decision that is still 18 months away, and we will

probably know a lot more about what is actually necessary once we get through this fighting season with the Afghans in the lead and we will know what they need and what they do not need. But I take your point. I think it is certainly a valid argument.

On the election process, just to go back to the chairman's question, I mean, this is something that the President has raised repeatedly with Karzai, including during his visit in January and since. It is something that the Secretary raised when he was last in Kabul. It is the only meeting he had outside of meetings with the government was on this topic. And it was the main issue at the recent donors conference that took place in Kabul where they went through the various Afghan performance and commitments, and the major emphasis in those discussions was on the importance of meeting the election targets to long-term assistance to the country.

Senator CORKER. So the chairman has asked you a question and you have pointed out that we really have not formalized a structure to help make that happen. I sat down with several of the people that may well run for President, and they are very concerned about the fact that we are not doing the things yet that we need to do to ensure that there is a free and fair election. I agree with the chairman. If that does not exist or at least by some standard, which may be a little different than we have here, I think it is going to be the greatest destabilizing thing that can possibly occur.

Let me just ask you another question relative to the elections. Is people's perception about security within the country an important factor as to whether we are going to have a good election process?

Ambassador DOBBINS. It will certainly be a factor in areas with heightened insecurity, and indeed, there are some areas where it may become difficult to vote. At the moment, the responsible Afghan officials are pretty confident that they can maintain adequate security throughout the vast majority of the country to permit the election to go forward. So the answer, of course, is yes, it is a factor.

I have not seen the latest statistics but by and large the Afghans, while they continue to be concerned about security, also continue to regard it as having improved in almost all of the country almost all of the time, which is encouraging. And they also have remarkably high confidence in the quality and capabilities of their own armed forces. But I think you are again, I think, making the point that we need to assure them that our commitment to Afghanistan's development and security is an enduring one.

Senator CORKER. So if they take the risk of getting out and getting involved in elections and they are not sure what our commitments are—of course, I hope they will know by that time. So I guess in many ways that issue hopefully will be decided by the administration.

Let me move on to another issue. The chairman mentioned a story that he read this morning about the capability of the Afghan forces. I think all of you and everybody here that has looked at the charts realizes that the Afghans are the ones taking most of the casualties today. They are the ones that are out in front. But there is a debate within the administration right now about force levels.

And I would like for Mr. Lavoy, if he would, to speak to this. I guess there is a corps in Kabul and then six corps scattered around

the country that are part of the Afghan military. And one of the great factors that NATO—one of the great assets that NATO represents to the Afghans right now is the role of enabling them. In other words, we are able to cause them to be far more effective if we have the ability to be involved in all seven of those corps. And yet, for some reason right now, it appears the administration is actually considering not providing the very few thousand, maybe not even that many, folks that would enable that to occur and for the country to actually have much greater security. This is an option for the administration, a decision for some reason, despite all that Americans have done over the last 11 years.

Mr. Lavoy, I would like for you to speak to the importance of our NATO force structure being such that we have the ability to actually have people out scattered around the country enabling the Afghans to secure their own country.

Dr. LAVOY. That is a very important issue, Ranking Member Corker.

Today, as I indicated earlier, the Afghan National Army and police are capable of performing operations on their own, but we do continue to provide, assist, and support to them to improve their effectiveness. Our desire, our objective is by 2015 for the Afghans to have all of the capabilities to be largely self-sufficient in all aspects of security. So planning operations, conducting the operations, withdrawing from operations successfully, doing medevac, doing all the other critical tasks.

So we are working very hard now to help them adopt and integrate those enabling capabilities inside the army and police structure today. That is a big challenge, as I indicated. Just 6 years ago, there were only 70,000 ANSF. Today it is a much bigger army, as you indicated, corps spread throughout the country, and the police also have seen commensurate growth and in adopting new qualitative aspects to perform all aspects of their missions.

So this is an ongoing process, and I would agree with you that the coalition is providing absolutely essential support for the ANSF to become more sustainable and ultimately a more self-sufficient force.

Senator CORKER. And if we were to try to, for some reason that would be unknown to me after all that has happened—if we were to try to just shave a little bit for some reason, the risk factors geometrically grow. Do they not?

Dr. LAVOY. Well, sir, I think as I indicated, the administration has a process in place where we will be doing periodic reviews of the performance of the ANSF and of other indicators that I indicated, the political transition and other factors that are critically important. So we will be assessing how well the ANSF perform over the course of this fighting season. And this is the first year that the ANSF are actually in the lead in combat, this fighting season. And we will make assessments and the necessary adjustments so that they have the capacity and the enabling capability to continue to perform admirably and provide that security for the population.

Senator CORKER. Mr. Chairman, I very much appreciate this timely hearing. I actually think it is very timely. I think decisions

hopefully—hopefully—will be made soon. I do think the lack of clarity is almost embarrassing and I think hurting our effort.

I want to thank the witnesses for being here. I know that you all are public servants that are very respected. I thank you for giving us an opportunity to share our frustrations publicly. I want to assure you I have done it privately also. So thank you, and I look forward to hopefully a good outcome.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Cardin.

Senator CARDIN. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and let me thank both of our witnesses not only for being here but for your service to our country.

I want to follow up on some of the questions that have been asked. I certainly share the concern about clarity and transparency with the Congress as we move forward on the removal of our combat troops from Afghanistan.

The election issues are very important. Good governance is important. Over these years, many of us have expressed concern, frustration about the corruption of the Afghan Government. We have seen over and over again countries' stability challenged and overthrown as a result of corrupt regimes.

What steps are we taking, in addition to the election process, to improve the governance in Afghanistan so that there is confidence among the people of Afghanistan that they are being treated fairly, which in turn gives us a much better chance for a stable regime? In a way, the United States has contributed to some of that corruption by the manner in which aid has been made available. What are we doing? Can you assure us that the way that we are proceeding will reduce the corruption within the Afghan Government so that we can have better governance as the United States transitions to the next stage in Afghanistan?

Ambassador DOBBINS. Well, we share your concern, Senator, about corruption, and it is a major focus of not only our efforts but the international community's efforts as a whole both to police ourselves, in terms of the degree to which our assistance efforts can be misused and to strengthen the government.

I think we have to recognize, first of all, that Afghanistan is in Central Asia, and so when we talk about levels of corruption, we need to look at Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. We need to note that Afghanistan has a more efficient tax collection system than Pakistan, only marginally so, and it puts it in a little bit of perspective.

Senator CARDIN. So some of your comparisons are not exactly the best countries that we like to—

Ambassador DOBBINS. No, they are the worst.

Senator CARDIN [continuing]. Look at as model examples of good governance.

Ambassador DOBBINS. No. Exactly. They are the worst. But that is the neighborhood that Afghanistan is in. And Afghanistan was, first of all, the poorest of all those countries to start with, and it had no government at all.

Senator CARDIN. But the United States has been actively engaged in the country now for 11 years.

Ambassador DOBBINS. I agree with that.

Senator CARDIN. So, you know, we should be able to have some impact on what legacy we leave to the people of Afghanistan.

Ambassador DOBBINS. I agree entirely with you. And this is a problem on which we need to continue to work in terms of our own efforts. About 10 percent of our total civilian strength in Afghanistan is dedicated to oversight and accountability of our own programs. In terms of the effectiveness of our aid programs, in my opening statement I think I mentioned that if you look at outcomes, if you look at levels of literacy, levels of longevity, the projection of health care, education, the Afghan Government is actually providing services which have historically never been provided before in Afghanistan to the population, certainly not at current levels.

So despite the corruption, despite having had no government at all 10 years ago when I last held this position or 12 years ago, rather, when I last held this position, you have a government that is performing by regional standards not very badly and by standards compared to other conflict and post-conflict societies, among the best in terms of actually delivering services and producing outcomes that improve the lives of the population.

Now, that does not mean that you are not absolutely right to keep harping on corruption and keep insisting that we do more about it.

Senator CARDIN. For the Afghan people to have a reasonable chance for a stable government—Senator Corker is right—they have to have a secure country. The military issues are very, very important. Governance is extremely important and the corruption issue I would point out I think we have not taken aggressive enough steps during these years to give a better opportunity for good governance. And finally, economic opportunity—the removal of the international military presence is going to have a major impact on the economy of Afghanistan.

What steps are being taken in order to provide economic opportunity for the people of Afghanistan as we transition to the elimination of American combat troops?

Ambassador DOBBINS. Well, I think there is no doubt that the reductions in the NATO military presence there is going to have some impact on the economy. I think the latest World Bank assessment was that it would lead to not a negative growth but a significant drop in positive growth. It is important that the nonmilitary assistance flows continue beyond the departure date for most U.S. troops, and I think that is one answer to your question.

There is no doubt that the Afghan economy has undergone considerable growth over the last decade. Indeed, I think the increase in GDP on a per capita basis is about 130 percent over that period, which is pretty substantial. Afghanistan has been growing at a rate comparable to China for most of the period we have been there, and that is probably not going to continue. You are going to see some diminution in that growth, and it will be important for our assistance and other forms of international assistance to continue to flow in the post-2014 period.

Senator CARDIN. Mr. Chairman, I agree with Senator Corker in regards to the need for the military security of Afghanistan. I think I may come at it from a different perspective as to the need for

American troops to be there. But I think every member of this committee wants to see more clarity on how the decisions are being made on troop levels as we go into this critical year. So I would just urge the continued openness to this committee as those decisions are being made. Americans expect Afghanistan to take responsibility for its own country, and I think we need to know what continued commitments are being made on behalf of America.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Cardin.

Senator Risch.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, I want to associate myself with the remarks of both Senator Corker and Senator Cardin regarding the clarity issue on those decisions. I think it is critical not only for Congress but for the American people to have a much, much better understanding, higher level of understanding than we do.

Having said that, those of us on this side have an important meeting at 11 o'clock this morning, and I was just called yesterday, which is unfortunate because this is a critically important issue. We will obviously be watching the transcript of this as we go forward. I was hoping to hear at least part of panel two, but that is not going to be possible. But in any event, I am going to yield back my time, again with the thanks for holding this hearing, and we will review the transcript after we are done.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator.

Senator Casey.

Senator CASEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I welcome you, Mr. Ambassador, and Doctor, thank you for your public service.

I wanted to start by way of reiteration, harkening back to what the chairman said about the elections and what happened in our committee as it relates to the resolution which has now been passed by unanimous consent in the Senate that you reconsider the position the administration took with regard to dedicating an ambassadorial level person to monitor the elections and to make a much greater commitment because I believe that if we do not have that kind of oversight or involvement as it relates to the Afghan elections, our strategy will be adversely impacted. So I will just make that point and we can develop it further later.

I wanted to start, though, with a question as it relates to women and girls in Afghanistan. We have had, over the last decade or so, tremendous progress in the number of girls going to school, literally millions now that were not going to school before, a lot more participation by women in the political process, even more involvement of women in the Afghan security forces.

Unfortunately, though, we have at the same time a great concern. We know that just recently in Helmand, Lt. Islam Bibi was assassinated. She joined the police force 9 years ago when it was particularly risky to do so. That is a grave understatement. So we have had progress in some areas but setbacks. An overarching concern is that when we draw down completely, when our forces are out, when our focus is elsewhere, that Afghanistan will go back to the old ways where women are not just marginalized but really targeted for discrimination and abuse and no effort or little effort will be undertaken to either maintain the gains or to advance in the

direction of more political participation and more involvement of women in the Afghan National Security Forces.

So because of that concern, I had introduced and got passed an amendment to the Defense Authorization Act which requires both of your Departments, State and Defense, to report on efforts to improve both the recruitment of women, as well as the retention of women, in the Afghan security forces. In addition to that, the report has to speak to efforts made to train male security personnel on gender sensitivity.

So I would ask you a two-part question. It is really for both of you. Number one is, How do you assess progress on both of those measures? And number two, When will the report be submitted?

Ambassador DOBBINS. Well, let me just say a general word and then turn to Peter on the more specific.

We share your priority on the role of women. We agree that there has been remarkable progress particularly when you are changing the social mores of an entire society. The role of women and women's equality is a problem in societies that are far more developed than Afghanistan. And so I think that we can take some satisfaction to the degree that it has been made. There is danger of roll-back, and it is one of the reasons why a continued American commitment, once we withdraw from combat operations, is going to continue to be important.

Let me turn to Peter on the more specific question.

Dr. LAVOY. Thanks, Jim.

Yes, let me also speak to your general issue. The role of women in the armed forces is a priority for us. What is a very positive development to observe for the leadership of the military, for the leadership of the army and the police, incorporating more women, giving them more responsibility, and treating them with the same dignity and respect as other soldiers and police is a priority for that leadership now. They are incorporating these norms and values in the leadership. So I do believe this will be sustainable going forward.

And the statistics I think are impressive. I have here that the Afghan Army—there are now over 400 women in the army, and that is very significant from zero. The Afghan police—there are over 1,500 women now serving in the police. And in Afghanistan's very small air force, there are 44 women now serving in this.

So I think that the strides have been made to have these women in there. And I have met a number of these women in Afghanistan. They are some of the most patriotic professional people in the entire country, and I think that experience is showing people that come from a different mindset, a different cultural background that the role of women should be here to stay in Afghanistan and it is important for Afghans to recognize that. And I believe this is taking place. And I think it is your support and others' that have pushed us in this direction, the right direction, and it is working.

Sir, you asked about this particular report. I can tell you right now that we are incorporating all the information that you have asked for in the broader 1230 report on Afghan National Security Forces, and I believe we have information coming up to you very quickly on when this will be handed over to you. But my under-

standing is that it will be coming up very, very soon. But we are attentive to it, sir.

Senator CASEY. Are we talking days or weeks?

Dr. LAVOY. It will be by the end of this month.

Senator CASEY. Thank you very much. I appreciate that because like any society, we will measure the progress in Afghanistan, especially after we are disengaged, by one of several measures. This will be one of them, women's participation. It is extraordinary, as you know and as people in the audience know that have had some interaction with women in Afghanistan directly.

I had an opportunity back in 2011 to sit with women, parliamentarians, people involved in the political process. One in particular, both her father and her husband were killed because of their political participation. Despite that horror, she still went forward and ran for office and stayed involved. So both on the political front and on the security front, it is vitally important.

I am running low on time, but I will submit a question for the record as well on the NRC Southwest, the \$34 million building, which I know has been raised as a taxpayer issue and a taxpayer concern about waste. And I will submit one for the record about the Pentagon's commitment on making sure that no more money is wasted on that kind of a structure. But I know we are out of time.

But thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Murphy.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for your focus on this issue and for this hearing. Thank you to both of you for being here today.

I recently returned from my fourth trip to Afghanistan, and I guess I came back with sort of three top-level takeaways.

One, to agree in part with your assessment of our ability to stand up the Afghan military. They have clearly made significant gains. They certainly are able to fight on their own in many parts of the country. I am not necessarily sure I would share the same optimism or put them in the same boat as the status of the police forces, but the military certainly shows a lot of progress.

On the negative side two sort of connected takeaways, one was a pretty surprising amount of diversity of opinion on behalf of U.S. personnel there as to what is going to happen once we significantly draw down and, second, the opinion that comes from the Taliban that they are winning the fight there today, that they are very optimistic about their ability to take some significant control of portions of the country once we leave. And as I was there right at the beginning of the spring fighting season, there was a lot of talk about this being a very decisive moment in terms of that impression on the ground amongst the Taliban and many Afghan civilians that the Taliban is doing very well.

So I guess, Ambassador Dobbins, I will just ask you this. What do we know so far about the spring fighting season? What do we know about the optimism of the Taliban? How has the military performed? I mean, it seems like we say every single year this is going to be a critical fighting season, but this one certainly seems to be true. What do we know so far?

Ambassador DOBBINS. Well, I think Peter, I am sure, will want to comment on this as well.

The Afghan forces are definitely in the lead. They are taking, by far, the majority of casualties, and in our judgment they are holding up well. But they are under significant pressure. Clearly the insurgents are making every effort to knock them off balance and to undermine their self-confidence as they step out on their own.

In terms of the Taliban, our impression is that there is something of a debate within the movement between those who see the military route as the only route forward and are confident of their ability to ultimately prevail and those who have a broader recognition of the changes that have taken place in Afghan society, the unwillingness of the population to return to the conditions they were in a decade ago, and the recognition that if the Taliban were to win a military victory, the health clinics would close, the schools would close, the cell phone towers would close, the roads would get potholed, the TV stations would go off the air, they would be getting no assistance, they would be recognized by no country in the world. And even if they were successful militarily, they could not govern that country for any length of time. And that is the element that is arguing that they need to negotiate as well as fight. I do not know that there are any of them who just think they should negotiate, but there are those who think they should justify it and those who think they should do both. So that is the kind of division that we have seen so far.

But, Peter?

Dr. LAVOY. Yes, thank you, Senator Murphy.

As you witnessed yourself, the Afghan security forces are doing a good job, and I think they are confident that they can achieve their mission. They are taking a lot of casualties. I think it is somewhere close to 400 killed in action every month total between army and police. So the insurgents are going after them. But this poses a threat, a threat to their individual security, but operationally they have performed very well and they continue to hold and secure the major population centers in Afghanistan and the key routes of communication throughout the entire country. So strategically the mission seems to continue to be successful with the security forces in the lead.

But you are right. There are a lot of questions about the future and whether you talk to Americans or especially you talk to Afghanistans there will be questions and uncertainties about what happens in the future. Afghanistan will be going through an unprecedented election where Hamid Karzai is not running. The outcome of this election is not clear to anyone, and we are doing, as Ambassador Dobbins indicated, everything we can to ensure a successful, fair, and free and representative election. But there is uncertainty.

In the security sector in particular where you have good governance in the country, the security problem tends to be easily manageable by the Afghan Army and police. Where you have poor governance, where you have a district or provincial governors that are not addressing the grievances and needs of the population, the security problem is more pronounced and it is more difficult for the army and the police.

So it gets to the point that I think the entire committee is making and we hear very loudly that improvements in the political

transition need to go hand in hand with the ongoing improvements in the security transition.

Senator MURPHY. Dr. Lavoy, let me ask you a specific question about the capabilities that we will need to continue to lend to the Afghan military, and that is with respect to the air capabilities of the Afghan military. It is very frustrating 10 years in to still see the status of the Afghan Air Force. We are contemplating sending to them a bunch of Russian helicopters that there are legitimate questions as to whether they can even operate. As we take a look at what kind of support we are going to need to provide them in the long run, it seems hard to believe that we are going to be able to walk away from providing them with medevac support or with close air support as the ground forces, which clearly have made progress, are out there doing the majority of the fighting. I walked away not completely understanding how we were not going to have a long-term military commitment above the ground.

Can you just talk to us a little bit about that?

Dr. LAVOY. Well, I think you are right, Senator. With the terrain in Afghanistan and the difficulty to access remote regions, air mobility is a critical asset. The Afghans recognize this. The Minister of Defense, Minister of Interior—they are looking to have their own air mobility, their own air force capability. And we are working with them to provide that capability.

We have gone from the security transition that is taking place—in the past, we would perform all the air operations for the Afghans and they would perform increasingly sophisticated ground operations. We are now moving in this transition phase where they are beginning to do more of the air operations themselves, and we are trying to work with them so that they will have this sustainable, self-sufficient air capability in the future.

It is not clear to us like it is not clear to you, sir, how long it will take for them to develop that capability. Training pilots is a laborious process, but it is something that we are prioritizing right now and also getting them the equipment and helping them develop the means to maintain this equipment in a sustainable manner.

As I indicated at the outset of my remarks, sir, the administration is conducting regular assessments of the performance of the Afghan security forces, including the air force. So we will make the necessary adjustments to ensure that they can have this capability going forward.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And to our witnesses, I was in Afghanistan last week with five others—actually seven other Senators and had robust discussions about the sort of midpoint in the fighting season and there was some positive news I think in terms of our own military leadership's reckoning of the performance, even including the scale-up of some air capacity. More to tell.

Much of the discussion that we had was about this troop number. We all recognize the troop number is not an end. It is a means to an end. And so what is the end we are trying to reach for the abil-

ity to train, assist, advise in an appropriate way, the ability to provide some CT efficacy, and we talked about that.

There has been public testimony before the SASC hearing, where I sit, from General Mattis in February recommending a troop level of about 13,600. General Dempsey in April publicly talked about a total force of between 8,000 and 12,000. I am not going to ask you about numbers, but I will say what we heard from military leadership in Afghanistan was not at odds at all with that general range.

I wanted to ask you a question, and I realize that one of the next witnesses, Stephen Hadley, actually phrased it better than I did. So I am just going to read a section and try to get you to tell me whether or not you agree with it. And if I could just hand the witnesses Stephen's testimony. It is on page 2, and I just want to read this into the record.

"The unfortunate recent press accounts of a 'zero option'—even if ultimately disavowed—are extremely damaging in this regard. The United States and its allies need to be actively countering the narrative of abandonment that is frequently heard in Afghanistan. The best way to do this would be for the U.S. Government to make clear as soon as possible its intention to have a robust troop presence in Afghanistan well beyond 2014 and to announce the size of that troop deployment now even before negotiations have concluded on the Bilateral Security Agreement that will provide the legal framework for this troop presence. The U.S. Government should be clear that it is ready to negotiate an acceptable BSA with the current Afghan Government or, if necessary, to leave that negotiation to the post-2014 government. But the U.S. troop commitment needs to be made clearly and it needs to be made now. This will do three things:

"One, it will reassure Afghans that their votes in the 2014 election will count for something because the government they elect will have the international support it will need to succeed.

"Two, it will encourage candidates to come forward to stand for election.

"And three, it will lessen the ability of some Afghan elements to use the BSA negotiations as a political football in service of other agendas."

In your best independent professional judgment, do you think the prompt announcement of the size of that security force, leaving the size of it for military and the administration to determine, would have the positive effects that I referenced from Stephen Hadley's testimony?

Ambassador DOBBINS. Well, let me say a couple of things.

First, the best that I can determine—and I have spent some time trying to determine it—the leak to the New York Times about the zero option and what prompted the story was not intended. It was not a negotiating ploy.

Secondly, I agree that the article was, on balance, unhelpful, and the focus on this issue unhelpful.

I have already addressed, I think, the issue of the timing of a decision on troop levels. But I will say that if you agree with Steve Hadley that both your views and those of former National Security Advisor Hadley are important and will certainly be taken into consideration.

Senator Kaine. Dr. Lavoy.

Dr. LAVOY. Yes, Senator. Well, first of all, I take everything that Steve Hadley says very seriously. I mean, he is very, very thoughtful, and I think even in this regard as well, that this does deserve really our fullest attention and we need to consider what he is saying. And I look forward to his testimony afterward.

I think right now, as I said, the Afghans are uncertain about their future. Any statement of commitment of U.S. or international support I think can mitigate some of that uncertainty. But we need to recognize the uncertainty will be there. Afghanistan is going through a democratic transition that is really unprecedented in that country. Similarly in Pakistan, the first-ever civilian government to be elected after another government serving a full term. So the democratic impulse is very, very strong, and we need to do everything we can to support that and to provide the confidence that tomorrow will be better than today, better than yesterday in Afghanistan and in Pakistan as well.

We are, as you indicated, in negotiations with the Afghan Government on the bilateral security agreement, which will be the framework that will enable us to have a military presence going forward. The negotiations have been rather successful. We have come to agreement on many, many things and parameters for that framework, but there still are some fundamental issues remaining.

The Afghans are very good and shrewd negotiators and I think they will use all leverage possible in this negotiation. I would just say the one thing about not having made that announcement, even though it might have contributed to some of the uncertainty going forward in Afghanistan, is that it is something that President Karzai and the Afghan Government needs to take seriously. They cannot take it for granted, and they need to have a very fair and balanced bilateral security agreement.

Senator Kaine. Right. And I would think that there would be bipartisan agreement not only on this committee but more generally. If we cannot reach a bilateral security agreement that protects our personnel, then that is a default zero option, I mean, if they are not willing to do that.

In addition to the three benefits that Dr. Hadley mentioned, would U.S. announcement of a force posture have an additional benefit of encouraging NATO allies to do the same, or is it likely that NATO allies will make hard commitments before we do?

Ambassador DOBBINS. Well, several allies have made generalized commitments, including the Germans, to take the lead in providing the core of a force in the northern part of the country, the Italians in the western part of the country. Several other allies have indicated their intention to stay. But, yes, they will measure their actual levels of commitment by ours in every case.

Senator Kaine. Dr. Lavoy, do you agree with that?

Dr. LAVOY. I do. We have had a principle governing our engagement in Afghanistan with the coalition: "in together, out together." We are making decisions. Coalition cohesion is critically important, and I believe that will be a factor as we go forward.

Senator Kaine. Great.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Kaine.

Just very briefly, because I do want to get to our next panel, but while I have you here, Ambassador Dobbins, I mean, your title includes Pakistan.

Ambassador DOBBINS. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. And while this hearing is about Afghanistan, you cannot talk about Afghanistan in part without looking at the realities in Pakistan. So let me just put out one or two observations, then ask you a question.

The last time I was in Pakistan, they obviously have their own interests. They also have their own views about our Afghan strategy, and they fear direct repercussions from instability in Afghanistan. And despite our generous assistance to Pakistan, which has been fraught with its own set of problems, I think we have not convinced them that we have shared goals and mutual interests in this regard.

So what realistically can we expect from Pakistan vis-a-vis Afghanistan, and how is our own strategy informed by their calculations? And finally, as we inevitably see a reduction in these international troop presence, the insurgents will likely make an even more forceful push to gain more ground before December 2014 to further strengthen their bargaining position and some would say with the support of the Pakistan backers.

Are there steps the United States is taking so that the Pakistan military is not allowed to hijack a reconciliation process to benefit its chosen Afghan proxies? What redlines are we drawing with Pakistan to make clear that we all need to be working from the same page here?

Ambassador DOBBINS. Well, like you, we are very concerned that the insurgency enjoys effective sanctuary and draws strength from that sanctuary in their operations in Afghanistan. We also recognize that the terrorists and insurgent groups within Pakistan operating against Pakistan are closely linked to those operating in Afghanistan, and we keep stressing to the Government of Pakistan that they cannot distinguish between benign insurgents and benign militants and malign militants, that to the extent militancy grows in their country, to whomever it may be directed, it is in the end going to destabilize their country, as well as that of their neighbors. And I think that recognition is beginning to sink in.

I think you have opened a large issue that probably requires more discussion than we can do here. I think we do see an opportunity with the new civilian government that has a clear mandate—

The CHAIRMAN. Are you suggesting that to give me a full answer, you need a classified session?

Ambassador DOBBINS. That was not my intention, but the answer is probably, "Yes."

The CHAIRMAN. I am looking for as much of a public answer as I can. The question is—I have time. So I am ready to listen to your full answer on Pakistan.

Ambassador DOBBINS. I think we see an opportunity with the new civilian government with a clear mandate, a majority in Parliament. They are grappling with their own internal security problem which is in some ways more acute than that of Afghanistan. I do not know what the actual statistics are in terms of civilian

casualties, but I think they are probably higher in Pakistan these days than in Afghanistan. And they are also conducting very significant military operations against militants, unfortunately not against the militants that are operating in Afghanistan, but against the militants that are operating in Pakistan. But they do have a substantial proportion of their military that is now committed to counterinsurgency operations in these border areas.

This is a continued area of dialogue. Pakistan has become more cooperative and more helpful on the issue of reconciliation. Now, you suggested that that may be with an intention of hijacking the process. I think they, obviously, would like to influence the process. That is to be assumed in any case. But I do not think there is much likelihood that they will hijack it. Neither we nor the Afghan Government have any intention of allowing that to occur. And in any case, our objective in these negotiations is not ourselves to negotiate peace in Afghanistan but to initiate an intra-Afghan process.

So I think your concerns about Pakistan are understandable. They are concerns that we have and discuss internally all the time. They are concerns that we address with the Government of Pakistan. I am hopeful that the Secretary of State will be able to visit Pakistan sometime soon. I have been there twice in the first 3 weeks in office and addressed many of these issues.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I think we will bring you back just maybe to start a discussion on Pakistan and move from there.

I want two yes-or-no responses to these two questions so we can move on to the next panel.

Ambassador Dobbins, can you assure the committee that you will work with INL to ensure that programs like the governor-led eradication, the Justice Sector Support Program, and the Correction Systems Support Program, for which INL has already obligated over \$400 million, will have adequate oversight and evaluation mechanisms so we know they are actually working and worthy of continued funding?

Ambassador DOBBINS. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Lavoy, can you assure the committee that DOD will look into whether it is worth pouring more money into the counternarcotics police of Afghanistan, which has a series of issues with it?

Dr. LAVOY. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. All right. That is the most succinct answers I have gotten in a long time.

Thank you both for your testimony. You have the thanks of the committee, and we look forward to continuing to engage with you.

Ambassador DOBBINS. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. With that, let me call up our next panel. On our second panel, we have a distinguished roster of private witnesses. Stephen Hadley was President George W. Bush's National Security Advisor. He is now a senior advisor for International Affairs at the U.S. Institute of Peace where he has worked closely with John Podesta and the Center for American Progress, pushing for credible Afghan elections in 2014.

Ms. Sarah Chayes is with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. She previously lived in Kandahar since 2001 work-

ing as a journalist running an NGO, an agricultural cooperative, and advising U.S. military officials on Afghan corruption in Pakistan.

And Mr. Nader Nadery wears many hats, including founding the Fair and Free Elections Foundation of Afghanistan. Again, I appreciate that he just arrived in from Kabul, and I want to thank him on behalf of the committee for flying in for this hearing to provide views from Afghan civil society.

With that, again, we will include all of your testimony into the record.

We ask our witnesses that are leaving if they can engage the press outside so that we can continue with the hearing.

Your full statements will be entered into the record and, Mr. Hadley, we will start with you.

STATEMENT OF STEPHEN HADLEY, SENIOR ADVISOR FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, U.S. INSTITUTE OF PEACE, WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. HADLEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. I want to express my appreciation for the opportunity to offer my views on the status of the Afghan transition. The views I express today are solely my own and do not represent those of the United States Institute of Peace which does not take policy positions.

As you mentioned, my recent involvement with Afghanistan has mainly been as cochair with John Podesta of a bipartisan expert senior working group convened in 2011 and 2012 by USIP and the Center for American Progress.

Our CAP-USIP senior working group concluded that the United States Government's objective in Afghanistan should be a relatively stable Afghanistan that does not slide back into civil war, destabilize its neighbors, or once again become a haven for transnational terrorists.

But more than the peace and prosperity of Afghanistan is at stake. A safe, secure, and prosperous Afghanistan is an essential element to achieving stability, peace, and prosperity in all of north-west Asia—Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, the Central Asian states, and even Iran and Russia—for this cannot be a stable, prosperous region free from terror unless these conditions can be achieved in Afghanistan.

The problems associated with achieving stability in Afghanistan have been exacerbated by the general hedging strategies among Afghans and their neighbors that are partly the result of uncertainties regarding the extent to which the United States is committed to Afghanistan post-2014. And that is why I am very much in sympathy with Senator Kaine and the portion he read from this testimony that we can solve this clarity problem if we would be clear soon that we are going to be in Afghanistan with a specific and significant number of troops adequate to do the missions we need to perform. And I think that word needs to get out very promptly, as we have talked about earlier in this discussion.

Last month, full responsibility for security in all of Afghanistan's districts was formally handed over to Afghan forces. The army that the United States and its NATO allies have spent a decade helping

to build and train has become one of the most trusted institutions in the country and now will have an opportunity to prove its worth to the Afghan people.

The crucial question for the security transition is not about tactics or firepower, but whether these forces are united around the idea that they are a national force defending a legitimate government supported by all elements of Afghan society. At this point, the political transition is the most critical of the three transitions that will occur in 2014, the security, political, and economic. While the security transition is well underway and good progress has been made, it cannot succeed unless the 2014 elections are relatively free and fair and produce a government viewed as legitimate and supported by the Afghan people and accepted by Afghans' neighbors and the international community.

If instead 2014 produces a corrupt and tainted election discredited in the eyes of the Afghan people and causing either the chaos of no coherent government or one viewed as illegitimate by the Afghan people, then we will be transitioning security responsibility to a government in a political meltdown, one that is unlikely to be able to command the support of the Afghan National Army and the other security forces. And at that point, the force could splinter along ethnic lines, contributing to instability and national fragmentation, violence, and perhaps a return to civil war.

So the question is how can this legitimate government with popular support and improved governance come about. An open, free, and fair election with broad Afghan participation offers the best opportunity to reconcile the whole of Afghan society which currently feels largely excluded from the political process. As part of an inclusive peace process, the United States and Afghan Governments have tried to test the Taliban to distinguish those who wish to reenter the political process from those who wish to continue their war on Afghan society. The efforts to date have failed, with the Taliban refusing to participate in talks with the Afghan Government and now talking of closing their Doha office.

While outreach to the Taliban should continue in a very careful way during the preelection period, the best time to test Taliban intentions will be after the conclusion of a successful election by a government of renewed legitimacy and popular support, backed by an army loyal to the government and supported by a significant post-2014 U.S. and coalition presence.

In the interim, efforts should be focused on ensuring a successful election, which should include efforts to convince the Taliban to reduce violence during the election period and perhaps to agree to local cease-fires. The Pakistani Government should be enlisted in this effort. There should also be a robust communication plan by primarily Afghan voices to make clear that those who seek to derail the elections through fraud or violence are the true enemies of a peaceful and prosperous future for the Afghan people.

Ultimately, the best prospect for achieving a stable Afghanistan will be a peaceful transition to a new government based on a free and fair Presidential election in 2014 that is credible and produces an outcome that is acceptable by the Afghan people. This outcome must be the U.S. Government's top priority in Afghanistan for the coming year.

Thank you very much.
 [The prepared statement of Mr. Hadley follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF STEPHEN HADLEY

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Corker, and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to offer my views on the status of the Afghan transition. The views I express today are solely my own and do not represent those of the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), which does not take policy positions.

My recent involvement with Afghanistan has mainly been as a cochair with John Podesta of a bipartisan expert senior working group convened in 2011–2012 by USIP and the Center for American Progress (CAP). The working group focused on U.S. strategy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan, and in particular on the need for a clear political strategy to guide our security and economic strategies. We produced five policy white papers, making recommendations on political and economic components of U.S. strategy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan, and met multiple times privately with senior administration officials to share our views. The administration encouraged us also to share our views with congressional leaders, which we did through a series of briefings in 2012. This year, John and I have cochaired two ad hoc off-the-record meetings with experts and senior administration officials to focus on Afghanistan's political transition and specifically the 2014 Afghan elections.

Our CAP–USIP Senior Working Group (SWG) concluded that the U.S. Government's objective in Afghanistan should be a relatively stable Afghanistan that does not slide back into civil war, destabilize its neighbors, or once again become a haven for transnational terrorist groups. While this outcome is desired by nearly all Afghans, it has been thwarted by the Taliban and other armed insurgent groups, neighboring countries, as well as the short-term concerns of powerful Afghan actors who have undermined the consolidation of democratic government institutions.

But more than the peace and prosperity of Afghanistan is at stake. A safe, secure, and prosperous Afghanistan is an essential element to achieving stability, peace, and prosperity in all of northwest Asia—Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, the Central Asian states, and even Iran and Russia. For this cannot be a stable, prosperous region free from terror unless these conditions can be achieved in Afghanistan.

The problems associated with achieving stability in Afghanistan have been exacerbated by general hedging strategies among Afghans and their neighbors that are partly the result of uncertainties regarding the extent to which the United States is committed to Afghanistan post-2014.

The unfortunate recent press accounts of a “zero option”—even if ultimately disavowed—are extremely damaging in this regard. The United States and its allies need to be actively countering the narrative of abandonment that is frequently heard in Afghanistan. The best way to do this would be for the U.S. Government to make clear as soon as possible its intention to have a robust troop presence in Afghanistan well beyond 2014 and to announce the size of that troop deployment now even before negotiations have concluded on the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) that will provide the legal framework for this troop presence. The U.S. Government should be clear that it is ready to negotiate an acceptable BSA with the current Afghan Government or, if necessary, to leave that negotiation to the post-2014 government. But the U.S. troop commitment needs to be made clearly and it needs to be made now. This will do three things:

1. It will reassure Afghans that their votes in the 2014 election will count for something because the government they elect will have the international support it will need to succeed;
2. It will encourage candidates to come forward to stand for election;
3. And it will lessen the ability of some Afghan elements to use the BSA negotiations as a political football in service of other agendas.

SECURITY TRANSITION

Last month, full responsibility for security in all of Afghanistan's districts was formally handed over to Afghan forces. The army that the United States and its NATO allies have spent a decade helping to build and train has become one of the most trusted institutions in the country. Now it will have the opportunity to prove its worth to the Afghan people. According to the NATO International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), at its current capability, the Afghan National Army should be able to hold its own against the Taliban. Its best units, especially its special forces, are excellent. Its main deficiency is that it continues to suffer from high rates of attrition. Under the right conditions, these problems can be solved if the international community continues to provide the levels of support promised at the

Chicago NATO summit last year. At an operational level, therefore, the security transition is on track.

The crucial question for the security transition is not about tactics or firepower, but whether these forces are united around the idea that they are a national force defending a legitimate government supported by all elements of Afghan society. At this point, the political transition is the most critical of the three transitions that will occur in 2014—security, political, and economic. While the security transition is well underway, and good progress has been made, it cannot succeed unless the 2014 elections are relatively free and fair and produce a government viewed as legitimate and supported by the Afghan people and accepted by Afghanistan's neighbors and the international community. If instead 2014 produces a corrupt and tainted election discredited in the eyes of the Afghan people and causing either the chaos of no coherent government or one viewed as illegitimate by the Afghan people, then we will be transitioning security responsibility to a government in political meltdown—one that is unlikely to be able to command the support of the Afghan National Army and the other security forces. At that point, the force could splinter along ethnic lines, contributing to instability and national fragmentation, violence, and perhaps a return to civil war.

ECONOMIC TRANSITION

A successful political transition is also critical to the 2014 economic transition. Afghanistan's economy has demonstrated significant growth over the past 12 years. The national currency has remained remarkably stable, only beginning to slide recently as a result of fears of instability beyond 2014. Much of this economic success has been the result of billions of aid dollars that have flowed into Afghanistan. As the transition continues, this funding will be reduced, and Afghanistan will need to supplement it with its own resources. The country has those resources, for example in vast potential mineral wealth, but needs to develop them. This will require a level of stability that allows construction and extraction, a regulatory framework that encourages investment, and a government that is effective enough to tackle corruption and ensure that the taxable revenues from the private sector and foreign donors end up in the national treasury, not in the pockets of politicians. The underlying condition for all of the above is, again, a legitimate government after 2014 supported by the Afghan people and that can begin to put in place the economic policies that will allow Afghanistan to achieve real sovereignty by reducing its reliance on foreign donors.

POLITICAL TRANSITION

The question is how can this legitimate government with popular support and improved governance come about? An open, free, and fair election with broad Afghan participation offers the best opportunity to reconcile the whole of Afghan society which currently feels largely excluded from the political process. As part of an inclusive peace process, the U.S. and Afghan Governments have tried to test the Taliban to distinguish those who wish to reenter the political process from those who wish to continue their war on Afghan society. Efforts to date have failed, with the Taliban refusing to participate in talks with the Afghan Government and now talking of closing their Doha office.

While outreach to the Taliban should continue in a very careful way during the preelection period, the best time to test Taliban intentions will be after the conclusion of a successful election by a government of renewed legitimacy and popular support, backed by an army loyal to that government, and supported by a significant post-2014 U.S. and coalition presence. In the interim, efforts should be focused on ensuring a successful election, which should include efforts to convince the Taliban to reduce violence levels during the election period and perhaps even agree to local cease-fires. The Pakistani Government should be enlisted in this effort. There should also be a robust communication plan by which primarily Afghan voices make clear that those who seek to derail the elections through fraud or violence are the true enemies of a peaceful and prosperous future for the Afghan people.

Ultimately, the best prospect for achieving a stable Afghanistan will be a peaceful transition to a new government based on a free and fair Presidential election in 2014 that is credible and produces an outcome that is accepted by the Afghan people. This outcome must be the U.S. Government's top priority in Afghanistan for the coming year. Afghanistan's Constitution gives immense powers to the President, especially the power to appoint the most important figures in government, including Cabinet members, Supreme Court Judges, police chiefs, as well as provincial and district governors. A new President will offer the opportunity for a new governing

team that is capable of commanding support from throughout the country and making the necessary political and economic reforms.

A government of renewed legitimacy and popular support, backed by an army loyal to that government and supported by a significant post-2014 U.S. and coalition presence, would be a powerful counterforce to the Taliban. A more effective government that is able to administer prompt justice even-handedly and increasingly deliver basic services to Afghans would provide a stark and compelling contrast to the Taliban, whose main strategy has been to deny Afghans access to government services and whose main tactics have resulted increasingly in the killing of innocent Afghans. Such a revitalized Afghan Government, backed by long-term international support, and with a smaller but still significant international military footprint, would undermine Taliban efforts to represent themselves as legitimate national political actors. And such a government would then be in a position to attract into the political process those Taliban prepared to surrender arms and turn to peace while leaving those that reject this offer to be dealt with by the Afghan army.

While credible elections are clearly crucial to achieving stability in Afghanistan, there are serious questions as to whether the 2014 elections will take place under conditions conducive to ensuring a legitimate broadly supported outcome. As the Wall Street Journal pointed out in an article on July 10, the failure of the Afghan legislative and executive branches to produce two electoral laws crucial to the effective conduct of the election would create real operational and political problems. If Parliament fails to do so before it adjourns, these electoral institutions would very likely be established by Presidential decree without the political consensus that parliamentary adoption would bring. The opposition has legitimate concerns that an electoral playing field created by Presidential decree, and with little consultation, will be tilted against them. Operationally, there is not much time to set up these institutions, adding to the serious logistical and security problems that will have to be addressed prior to elections now scheduled for April 5, 2014. Afghan political elites, representatives of the government, civil society, and all friends of Afghanistan need to encourage Parliament and the President to come together and adopt these necessary laws before Parliament adjourns.

President Karzai's role in this transition is central. Many critical things have been said about him. I worked with him closely when I was in government. I respect him as a leader facing incredible challenges, who has not always received the respect or support he deserved in seeking to meet those challenges. He has begun the process of creating law-based, democratic institutions in his country. His legacy can now be to ensure the continuation of this process and setting his country on a course toward peace and prosperity. That process begins by ensuring a free and fair election in 2014 that produces a legitimate government supported by the vast majority of the Afghan people. If President Karzai steps up to this historic role, it behooves all Afghans to ensure that he can live in peace and honor in his country after his Presidential term is complete.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are recommendations on what needs to be done to support the upcoming political transition in Afghanistan. The primary responsibility for this transition—rightly—belongs to Afghans. Our main responsibility is to help to advance and not to undermine their efforts to hold a successful election and to achieve an effective handover of power to the next elected governing team.

1. *Credible elections are the top priority.*—The U.S. Government must send a clear and consistent message, in words and deeds, that the elections are the top priority. We must be aware that there is a credibility gap between our stated commitment to the 2014 elections and the degree to which our commitment is believed by key Afghan actors. Our regional allies and partners can help to reinforce this message.

2. *Acts count as much as words.*—We must be seen to invest political capital in helping to ensure the election takes place. It has been clear to Afghans that we have invested political capital in the Doha process. They must see a similar investment of political capital in the electoral process. The United States should also encourage consensus-building efforts among Afghan political actors to facilitate the emergence of electoral coalitions able to garner nationwide, multiethnic support.

3. *Logistics and security.*—NATO ISAF forces should work with Afghan security forces to begin planning for the security and logistical challenges of the election. This can be part of the post-security handover training and assistance mission. Support for an impartial election is a way for the Afghan security forces to demonstrate their capacity to act in the interest of the nation. Early and consistent public education messages are also essential.

4. *Support a dignified post-presidency role for President Karzai.*—The United States must allay any uncertainties that President Karzai might have about the U.S. commitment to support him in a dignified and secure post-Presidency.

5. *Counter the abandonment narrative.*—The uncertainty regarding the future of the U.S. engagement in Afghanistan is a major cause of hedging strategies that undermine the current transition. The Bilateral Security Agreement should be concluded as soon as possible, or failing that, the United States should state publicly now its commitment to maintaining a specified and significant number of U.S. troops post-2014.

6. *Protect the gains made by women.*—One of the most important achievements of the past decade has been the tremendous gains made in protecting and promoting the rights of Afghan women. Afghanistan needs the resources and inputs of all of its population to resolve its problems and take advantage of its opportunities. The United States must continue to press that these rights, currently guaranteed in the Afghan Constitution, be both preserved and made real for more Afghan women post-2014.

7. *Look for opportunities presented by Pakistan's new government.*—The United States has an opportunity with the new Pakistani Government to find ways in which Pakistan's legitimate security concerns can be addressed through a framework in which Pakistan's and Afghanistan's sovereignty are mutually reinforced, while the United States maintains good relations with both.

The United States and the international community have 18 months in which to align efforts behind an overriding objective of a successful political transition. If this is done with clarity and purpose, there is a strong chance of consolidating much of what has been achieved over the past 12 years. It is clearly time to transition the U.S. engagement in Afghanistan to a more sustainable level. But we must manage this transition period extremely carefully to protect the gains that have been achieved at such great cost.

Thank you Mr. Chairman, and I am happy to take questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Ms. Chayes.

STATEMENT OF SARAH CHAYES, SENIOR ASSOCIATE, CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE, WASHINGTON, DC

Ms. CHAYES. I thought we are going to go in the order we were sitting.

Thank you very much, Chairman Menendez. Mr. Kaine, thank you very much for this opportunity to discuss conditions in Afghanistan and the implications for United States policy.

Just to remind you of my dual perspective, about 8 years in downtown Kandahar and then serving for two COM ISAFs and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. Of course, judgments are my own. They got used to that, most of them.

Three topics dominate the Afghanistan debate: the security situation and related to that, the size of a residual U.S. force; the 2014 election; and though it has not really been apparent here today, negotiations with the Taliban.

In each case, I think eyes are fixed on the formal process while the real meaning lies beneath that surface. What is missing is a political strategy within which the formalities might add up to something. At this point, I think that strategy must include a more broad-based reconciliation process that could set the stage for credible elections and a new approach to Pakistan.

On elections, I would really just like to second everything that you, Mr. Chairman, said and Ranking Member Corker. Sadly, what really matters in Afghan elections today is not votes, the ability to mobilize them, but who controls the process. So last weekend, the head of the Election Commission declared that parliamentary

debate on the legislation mentioned by Ambassador Dobbins has dragged on for too long, and Karzai will just be enacting regulations by decree. That is a really big issue.

Also, as I have mentioned here previously, U.S. payments to the key political actor also matter.

Here is my recommendation. If the U.S. Government—and it is going to echo a lot of what has been said here today—is going to lend the moral authority of this country to the 2014 election, then words like “credible” have to mean something. U.S. support for the vote must be contingent on some standards, for example, an empowered Elections Commission whose members are not appointed by the President. If Mr. Karzai wants to run an election he can control, OK, but not on the U.S. dime and not on the democratic reputation of the United States. And I am not sure that another ambassador in Kabul really would change these dynamics necessarily. It did not in 2009.

On security, again a lot of talk has been devoted to the Afghan National Security Forces’ tactical capabilities. There have been real improvements though, as mentioned, the ANSF casualty rate has spiked over any previous record, according to ISAF officials, at more than 40 casualties per 10,000 servicemembers per month, which would be approximately a total of 1,200 killed and wounded per month, higher than today’s Washington Post puts it.

But the technical skills of Afghan soldiers are really beside the point. To echo Mr. Hadley in different words, an army, the best army—it is only a tool in the hands of a government. You can exercise it, take the arm to gym and do exercises, lift some weights, but if the body to which that arm is attached is nonviable, then it is not going to be able to defend much. That is the substance that keeps getting missed.

On that and security in general, measures lack. ISAF stopped reporting violence statistics in March. They were disputable anyway—those statistics. So we are left with anecdotes.

Madrassa students in Pakistan are being sent into the fight in large numbers this year. Taliban are attacking in larger groups than they have in years, but there have been improvements in Kandahar, for example, which is my own experience. Afghan colleagues there can visit areas the Taliban controlled in 2009. The current police chief is keeping the Taliban at bay, but at such a cost in extrajudicial killing that he is turning much of the town against him. His name is Raziq. I have known him for more than a decade, and this was to be expected. I warned General Petraeus when he was COM ISAF about this man’s style and the potential Leahy amendment issues that it raises. Meanwhile, northern Helmand, for example, is reinfested with Taliban.

A point often missed is the Taliban strategy is to obtain the maximum policy impact for the minimum investment of resources. That is what asymmetric warfare is all about. So note the recent attacks. The usefulness in that context of any assessment of current security trends for predicting outcomes is questionable.

As for residual U.S. troops, I am actually not sure that 10,000 would make much more of an impact on security and stability in Afghanistan than zero. My reading of the signals in this town is that zero is a pretty likely bet. And to be honest, in the absence

of a policy framework within which the commitment and sacrifice would make sense, I am finding it difficult to argue with that.

So how to get to zero without leaving a black hole behind, how to get to zero responsibly honoring the efforts and losses and preserving some potential for the Afghan people and for regional stability.

Here is my recommendation. Do not look to security structures to provide security amidst political meltdown. The way to wind down United States involvement in Afghanistan without the place unraveling behind us is not to focus on military technicalities. It is to take a different approach to the political context. A single negotiating track with the Taliban leadership was never the right approach for a couple of reasons. The ISI involvement with Taliban leadership may be complex and fraught, but it is effective, as Ranking Member Corker raised earlier. It is likely that the ISI started reconstituting the Taliban in late 2002, and I watched them doing that precisely with negotiations in mind. They, like us, presumed an insurgency would end in negotiations, and they wanted to drive us there and then control the outcome. The ISI retains enough hold over Taliban leadership to choose who goes to Doha and what they settle for. Ironically, we have been practically begging Pakistani officials to play that role.

In other words, we would not be negotiating with autonomous representatives of an Afghan movement in Doha. We would be talking to the ISI by proxy. That carries a couple of implications. It means we are effectively rewarding Pakistan for the deliberate use of violent proxies as an instrument of national policy, and it means the terms of any deal would likely be unacceptable to most Afghans because they would entail surrendering too much sovereignty, which brings me to my next point.

It is not just the Taliban who are opposed to the way the Karzai government has been operating. It is most Afghans. But the others did not take up arms, and yet those Afghans have no seat. We are, in effect, punishing the nonviolent opposition in our rush to placate the violent opposition. This approach does not line up with our values as a nation, and it is almost guaranteed not to work but rather to lead to the next war.

Here is my recommendation. Two prongs. With respect to Afghan reconciliation, make it much more inclusive like what the French tested late last year in Chantilly. Involve all the major constituencies including the Taliban and members of the Karzai government.

With respect to Pakistan, first, raise the cost of using violent proxies as an instrument of policy by an array of leverage and smart sanctions do not ask Pakistani officials to act as agents to help organize intra-Afghan talks.

Second, open a proper state-to-state channel through which Pakistan can identify and address its legitimate strategic aspirations and concerns with respect to its neighbor.

Mr. Chairman, I really think only such a change in our political approach can offer a way to conclude military involvement in Afghanistan without leaving the region more dangerous than we found it in 2001.

Thanks.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Chayes follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SARAH CHAYES

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Corker, committee members, I am grateful for this opportunity to speak with you about conditions in Afghanistan, and the implications for U.S. policy.

My analysis derives from a rare dual perspective: I lived in downtown Kandahar for most of the past decade, among ordinary men and women from the city and the surrounding villages, no guards or barbed wire, no translator. And, from 2009 through 2011, I served as special adviser to two ISAF commanders and then the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Of course, my judgments are my own. They got used to that—most of them.

Three main topics dominate the current Afghanistan debate: the security situation—and related to that, the size of a residual U.S. military force—the 2014 Presidential election, and negotiations with the Taliban. In each case, attention is fixed on the formal process, while the real meaning lies beneath that surface. What is missing is an overall political strategy within which technicalities might add up to something. At this stage, that strategy must include a more broad-based reconciliation process that would help set the stage for credible elections, and a different approach to Pakistan.

On Elections

Some in Washington argue for making the 2014 exercise central to U.S. policy. They focus on voter registration and other such technicalities. I don't disagree with the sentiment.

But while we are all discussing the vital importance of a credible election, moves are being made on the ground to ensure it will be no such thing. Sadly, what matters in Afghan elections as they are currently run is not who can mobilize the most votes, but who can control the process. So President Karzai and his lieutenants in the executive branch are grappling with some of your counterparts over the makeup and duties of the election commission and the complaints body. No surprise, Karzai is winning. As of this weekend, the head of the election commission declared that the tussle over the electoral law had gone on too long for the provisions to be implemented, and that Karzai would be enacting regulations by legislative decree.

In this context, I've already spoken about the issues raised by U.S. payments to the key political actor.

Recommendation: If the U.S. Government is going to lend the moral authority of this country to the 2014 election, then words like "credible" have to mean something. U.S. financing and support for the vote must be contingent on Kabul's adherence to some minimum standards. A truly independent, empowered elections commission whose members are not appointed by the President, for example, and a real complaints mechanism, with teeth. If President Karzai wants to run an election he can control, that's his right. But not on the U.S. dime, and not on the democratic reputation of the United States.

On Security

Much attention has been devoted to the Afghan National Security Forces' tactical capabilities. There have been improvements—though vetting and discipline problems were devastating just a year ago. And the ANSF casualty rate has spiked over last year's, according to U.K. officials. Attrition is also up.

But the technical skills of Afghan soldiers are really beside the point. The real meaning is this. An army—the best army—is only a tool in the hands of a government. You can exercise that army, sort of like taking an arm to a gym and lifting weights with it, but if the body to which it's attached is nonviable, it won't be able to defend much. That is the fundamental point that keeps getting missed in discussions about ANSF capabilities.

Trying to get a meaningful read on the security situation is elusive. ISAF stopped keeping violence statistics in March. And they were disputable anyway. So only localized anecdotes are left. There are clear improvements around Kandahar. Colleagues of mine are now able to visit areas that were under deadly Taliban control in 2009. The current police chief of Kandahar is keeping the Taliban at bay, but I'm hearing at such a cost in extra-judicial killing that he's turning much of the town against him. I have known him for more than a decade and this was to be expected. I warned General David Petraeus, then commander of ISAF, about the police chief's style and the potential Leahy amendment issues it raises. Meanwhile,

northern Helmand is already reinfested with Taliban, according to both residents and U.S. military personnel.

A point often missed in assessments of security is that the Taliban's strategy is to obtain the maximum policy impact for the minimum investment of resources. That is what asymmetric warfare is all about. Recent spectacular attacks in Kabul and elsewhere indicate they're still doing a good job at that.

What local deals are being made between a given kandak and the local Haqqani commander? Whose fighters are waiting for ISAF's final departure? What depredations are the local police committing? No one can claim to know, beyond a very localized understanding.

So any assessment of current security trends can only be a surface impression. Its significance for predicting outcomes is minimal.

As for residual U.S. troops, 10,000 would not make much more of an impact on security and stability in Afghanistan than zero. My reading of the signals in this town is that zero is a likely bet. And to be honest, in the absence of an overall policy framework within which the commitment and sacrifice would make sense, I find it difficult to argue otherwise.

But how to get to zero U.S. troops after 2014 without leaving a black hole behind? How to get to zero responsibly, honoring the efforts and losses of so many, and preserving some potential for the Afghan people and for regional security? The obligation the United States engaged by intervening in the first place—and the historical memory in that region of the U.S. just leaving—imposes one last effort to think that through.

Recommendation: Don't look to security structures to provide security amidst political melt-down. The way to wind down U.S. involvement in Afghanistan without the place unraveling behind us is not to focus on military technicalities. It is to take a different approach to the political context.

On Negotiations

The idea of a single negotiating track with Taliban leadership was never the right approach to the political context—for several reasons. The ISI involvement with Taliban leadership may be complex and fraught, but it is deep and effective. It is likely that the ISI started reconstituting the Taliban in late 2002—and I watched them doing it—with precisely the aim of negotiations in mind. They, like us, presumed an insurgency would end in negotiations, and they wanted to drive us there, and then control the outcome. The aim was to regain a degree of the proxy control over Afghanistan that they enjoyed under the Taliban regime. Now, however the relationship may have evolved, the ISI certainly retains enough hold over Taliban leadership to choose who goes to Doha, and what they settle for. And ironically, we have been practically begging Pakistani officials to play that role.

In other words, we would never be negotiating with autonomous representatives of an Afghan movement in Doha, even if talks started. We'd be talking to the ISI by proxy. That carries a couple of implications. It means we are effectively rewarding Pakistan for the deliberate use of violent proxies as an instrument of national policy. Other countries, like Iran and North Korea, may take notice. And it means that the terms of any deal that might result would likely be unacceptable to most Afghans, because they would entail surrendering too much sovereignty.

Which brings me to my next point: it's not just the Taliban who are bitterly opposed to the way the Karzai Government has been operating. Most Afghans are. But the others did not take up arms. Even though the ballot box—due to fraud—has not been a recourse. And yet, those Afghans have no seat at these negotiations. We are in effect punishing the nonviolent opposition in our rush to placate the violent opposition. This approach does not line up with our values as a nation. And it is almost guaranteed not to work—but rather to lead directly to the next war.

Recommendation: Two prongs. With respect to Afghan reconciliation, make it much more inclusive, along the lines of what the French tested in Chantilly late last year. Include all the major constituencies, including the Taliban and members of the Karzai government, as coequal participants. Choice of participants would necessarily be arbitrary and imperfect at this late date, but it can easily be made more representative than the Doha process. Talks should be facilitated by talented international mediators, perhaps sponsored by one or more of our NATO partners.

With respect to Pakistan, first and—in concert with our allies including the U.K.—raise the cost of using violent proxies as an instrument of policy, by means of an array of leverage and smart sanctions. Certainly do not ask Pakistani officials to act as agents to help organize intra-Afghan talks. Second, open a proper, formal, state-to-state channel through which Pakistan can identify and address its legitimate strategic aspirations and concerns with respect to its neighbor. Again, this is the type of initiative international bodies are well-placed to help facilitate.

Mr Chairman, only such a change in our political approach can offer a way to conclude U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan without leaving the region even more dangerous than we found it in 2001. Such an adjustment would not require more material resources, just more focus and attention, and the willingness to take some political risk.

Thank you for inviting me to share these thoughts.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.
Mr. Nadery.

STATEMENT OF AHMAD NADER NADERY, FOUNDER AND CHAIRMAN, FAIR AND FREE ELECTIONS FOUNDATION OF AFGHANISTAN, KABUL, AFGHANISTAN

Mr. NADERY. Chair Menendez, Senator Kaine, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak before this committee at a very critical time of our history in Afghanistan.

I will speak today about three issues, mainly political transition, the talks in Doha, and generally the talks with the Taliban, and the ongoing security transition.

I will also outline what is rarely reported in the media, that Afghanistan is at a turning point with transformation made in many spheres and newly found confidence in our state and security forces. Personally, whenever I see the young women and men in uniform, I feel proud in Afghanistan.

However, there are risks and fears. Many Afghans had their confidence shaken by the recent events in Doha, which helped legitimize terrorist groups and played into Pakistan's hand.

The news this week that President Obama was again considering zero troops also shook confidence in Afghanistan. We understand your frustration but, Respected Senator, your real partners in Afghanistan are the Afghan people, not our current officials alone. In less than a year, we will have a new President and a year later, a new Parliament. At this moment when the blood, sweat, and tears of these past 10 years is finally starting to pay off, it would be a great mistake to sacrifice our achievements to a hasty withdrawal or a bad deal.

Today life for most Afghans, particularly women and children, has changed for the better. Democratic freedoms, women's rights, and the media represent some of the greatest achievements of the past 10 years of international engagement. We have got 8 million children in school, more than 100 universities, a young population with real opportunities for upward mobility. And with our security forces growing in strength, transition has exceeded our expectation. That is why it is vital to get the political transition right.

We welcome Secretary Kerry and General Dunford in today's Washington Post calling for a free, fair, and transparent election. There are huge challenges but continued U.S. attention we believe can make a real difference.

The priorities are, therefore, first, President Karzai needs to approve the electoral law, appoint a chair of the Election Commission, and put a complaint process in place.

Second, the United States should promote a level playing field and continue to insist elections are held on time and according to the Afghan Constitution.

Moving to Doha, Doha really distracted, we believe, the highest level of the U.S. Government for our political transition and side-

lined negotiations over the very critical issue of the bilateral security agreement. It emboldened the Taliban and played very easily into the hands of Pakistan. The Taliban show little sign of being ready or able to negotiate or respect our constitutional order or women's rights or democracy. They have actually become more extreme in their deliberate attacks against the civilian population. I lived through their rule, so I know how brutal they are.

If we focus on political transition with a new government, a fresh mandate, backed by a bilateral security agreement, we can create incentives for the Taliban and for Pakistan for them to rethink their strategy to one that is more conducive and inclusive of peace.

On security, Mr. Chairman, the newfound strength and courage of our security forces has been demonstrated by their speed with which they have closed down recent attacks on our capital with minimal loss of life. But we still face big challenges. Our forces are already missing the coalition enabler support. Senator Corker has spoken about that also. The Afghani Air Force is not in place and while our people want to serve in the air force, it will take more time to build. Technical knowledge like counter-IED and military intelligence is growing but slowly. On top of this, our brave forces are not yet supported by a commander in chief that they deserve.

We know our forces are fighting bravely, being killed and wounded for the defense of their own country, but they need continued help. That means, first, a bilateral security agreement to boost confidence. Second, fulfilling Chicago commitments to the Afghan Air Force and maintain some international air support until our Afghan air force can take full responsibility. Finally, fulfill commitments for financial and material support for the continued development of the institutional strength of the Afghan army, police, and intelligence.

We are in debt to the United States for all you have done for our country. We know it is a burden. We do not seek an open-ended support, but we are now so close to a turning point. Soon we can become your trusted ally in an uncertain region.

I look forward to your questions and thank you all, committee members, for your continued engagement and interest in my country and for giving me this opportunity to speak. Thank you very much.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF NADER NADERY

INTRODUCTION

Senator Menendez, Ranking Member Corker, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before this committee at this critical time in Afghanistan's political transition.

I am the chairperson of the Free and Fair Elections Federation of Afghanistan (FEFA) and the Director of the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU). From 2004 until last month I was a commissioner of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission.

I will be speaking about three issues that can determine the course of Afghanistan's future: The ongoing security transition; the upcoming political transition and elections; and, finally the public perception of the current efforts to start negotiations with the Taliban, and U.S. role within it.

I will also outline for you what so rarely gets reported in the media—that Afghanistan is at a turning point toward stability, with our people beginning to have faith in a democratic system. The investments of the last decade by Afghans and their partners, in particular the United States, have transformed the country. We have seen unprecedented progress made in many spheres, but perhaps what makes me

most proud is that on the eve of transition, Afghans are ready and eager to stand on their own feet, with a newfound trust in the abilities of their security forces.

However, alongside this new sense of determination, there are risks and fears. Many Afghans had their confidence shaken by the recent opening of a Taliban office in Doha. Even if the Taliban have temporarily closed the office, the process helped to legitimize a group that is terrorizing the Afghan people, and played directly into Pakistan's hands. The United States involvement in that process gave rise to conspiracies in Afghanistan about the real priorities of the U.S. Government. It would be a tragedy if—at this moment—when so much of the blood, sweat, and tears of these past 10 years is paying off—the achievements that the United States has helped to win were sacrificed for a deal that could destroy them. Particularly when we stand less than a year away from elections which will bring a new leader with a fresh mandate to govern, and to negotiate on behalf of the Afghan people.

Similarly, the recent reports that the United States might be seriously considering a rapid drawdown to “Zero Troops” sends a terrible message to Afghans at this critical juncture. It would be a waste if the very understandable frustrations with our leadership should prompt a precipitous withdrawal during this delicate phase. Drawing down to zero troops before transition is complete would shake the confidence of your true partners in Afghanistan—the Afghan people. And it would send a message to the Taliban that the United States is giving up on all its good work here.

With a small residual force, increasingly tailored over time, all the impressive work of the United States military in helping to build our army and police force can be cemented. Combine this with a Bilateral Security Agreement and a new government and Parliament, and you have the outlines of a far more stable trajectory.

Many Afghans—particularly among our new generation, who constitute the majority of the people—have genuine faith in the continued development of a moderate, democratic Afghan Republic. The U.S. Congress has rightly been concerned about the corruption in our government, but most Afghans do not simply judge the state on the flaws of individuals. It is the state institutions—in particular our armed forces—that have earned the respect of the people. This stands in absolute opposite to the Taliban-era Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

This is because beneath the dismal headlines that often dominate the international media, life for most Afghans has changed for the better. Educational and employment opportunities, women's rights and democratic freedoms represent some of the greatest achievement of these past 10 years of international engagement. As this “Decade of Transition,” comes to an end, the highly anticipated “Decade of Transformation” can be built on the gains of what was achieved in the past 12 years.

But for all these achievements, the future of Afghanistan might still be unstable at best or disastrous at worst without close attention to the following three areas: one, the security transition; two, the political transition, including the election of a new President in less than a year; and three, public confidence in the peace and reconciliation process.

Transition: Impact and Assessment

First allow me to briefly discuss how Afghanistan looks today, at the end of the Transition decade:

In terms of social change:

- We've had a rapid demographic shift—with over 60 percent of the population under the age of 20. This new generation benefits from huge improvements in educational opportunities, urbanization, and greater social mobility.
- We have some extraordinary women leaders in the public sphere, including parliamentarians, doctors, lawyers, judges and civil society leaders, with women's rights being articulated by men as well as women activists. As a concrete example of their recent gains—2 months ago Afghanistan adopted its first workplace antiharassment regulation championed by two dynamic young technocrats in government in partnership with civil society. It is now enforced throughout local government.
- Human rights, including a commitment to the concept of human rights, are becoming firmly established in public discourse.
- Over 8 million children are enrolled in schools of which 2.6 million are girls. We have over 100 private and public universities compared to only 5 in 2004.
- Improvements in primary health care have led to a sharp drop in maternal and infant mortality rates.

Moving on to the security, democratic, and economic spheres:

- The security handover is now complete—and has fared much more successfully than most had predicted. This has only further boosted the confidence of Afghans on their own security forces. This might not be the impression you get here, reading the endless bad news about Afghanistan in the international media. But in Afghanistan we highlight our successes as well as our failures. The June attack on the Presidential Palace was a clear example of this: here in the United States it was reported as a dramatic breach of security. In Kabul reporters and analysts also commented on the ability of the Afghan security forces to bring an end to the attack in just 90 minutes.
- Now, to complete what we see as a successful security transition, it is time to finalize the Bilateral Security Agreement, which will support the political and ensuing economic transition.
- In the democratic sphere: we've seen new maturity and development in our political parties. New political movements and parties have emerged that are not based on individual strongmen or ethnicities, but represent the new generation. Consensus-building is now the norm. For instance, last fall FEFA facilitated negotiations between 48 political parties and civil society organizations, which resulted in the adoption of a 50-point "Declaration of Principles on Electoral Reform." So while our elections still face huge challenges—these trends show democracy is taking root.
- The media—a prerequisite for any democracy—is one of our great success stories. Today 95 percent of the Afghan population is exposed to some form of mass media and almost 500,000 Afghans are on Facebook compared to almost zero access to Internet 10 years ago. We have 50 television stations, 150 radio stations, and 100s of newspapers.
- While the fight against corruption remains challenging, as it is for so many developing nations, the newfound courage of our media in taking on high-level corruption and impunity gives me confidence that we can begin to cure this cancer. Afghan journalists are routinely putting themselves at risk to report on the crimes of some of the most powerful, and in doing so starting to change the culture of impunity.
- And it's not just the media that is pushing for better governance. The Free and Fair Election Foundation, which I head, is pushing for electoral transparency and demanding accountability of parliamentarians to their constituencies. Afghan watchdog groups like Afghan Anti-Corruption Network, Integrity Watch, and Equality for Peace and Democracy have also become bold advocates for cleaner, more transparent government. Their advocacy recently triggered a parliamentary effort to impeach a minister accused of corruption.
- In the economic and development sphere, hundreds of Afghan-owned small and medium-sized enterprises have sprung up; 16,000 new businesses were registered between 2004 and 2011, and thousands of kilometers of roads have been paved. Our telecommunications industry is thriving with around 20 million cell phone users (out of a population of 35 million). And with significant reserves of rare earth, minerals, gas, copper, and iron ore it is not too outlandish a statement to say that Afghanistan has the capacity to achieve economic autonomy.
- And last but not least—there's been unprecedented progress in sports and athletics—we won two Olympic medals in 2012, our cricket team made it into the international top 20, we have a newly created football league which has jumped up the international rankings after lying dormant for nearly 20 years. We have even nurtured a strong women's football team.

Alongside these great gains, the reality is that today's Afghanistan presents a dual picture: there are small but highly visible groups of Taliban and other terrorists who are rooted in Afghanistan's past—a past wracked by repression, lawlessness and a painful isolation from the rest of the world.

But a growing majority of Afghans have left that past behind. While suicide attacks and violence still make the headlines, most Afghans are now focused on jobs, the rule of law, accountability and the coming elections in 2014.

Our civil society has grown in confidence, diversity, and strength—from emerging new political parties to women leaders, to our courageous investigative reporters and dynamic entrepreneurs; we are all invested in the same future, the same path to continued progress.

As 2014 rapidly approaches, we look back at the last decade of our efforts that have born all these fruits with delight. I grew up during the civil war and lived through the Taliban's brutal rule; I can attest personally that the past decade has led to radical improvements for our nation. But, cementing these achievements and paving the path for future peace and progress is also on our minds, for these gains can be quickly unraveled.

After this “Decade of Transition,” Afghans share a collective sense of ownership with the process and faith in the system. With international support, we are now leading the “Decade of Transformation.”

Political Transition: Free and Fair, Achievable and Effective Elections

At the heart of political transition are the upcoming elections in 2014 and 2015, which have the potential to redefine Afghanistan’s future as well as to cement the investments of the United States in our emerging democracy. We welcome Secretary Kerry’s commitment to promoting a “free, fair, and transparent elections in 2014.” However, for this to happen, the United States cannot afford to be sidetracked by the likes of the Doha process. Such distractions have the potential to jeopardize the political transition and the achievements made to date. I would therefore urge Ambassador Dobbins and his team to keep their focus on Afghanistan, not Doha, and make the political transition and the elections, their first priority.

Of course, challenges remain, but a credible election is the first step to building a credible government. There is still time to put in place the proper legal framework and to develop the necessary electoral institutions to ensure noninterference. Afghans are working hard to hold their government to account, and ensure that Afghans have the confidence and motivation to take part. The United States can also play an important role in the process.

This upcoming election is already prompting robust campaigns and debates all over Afghanistan. It is clear to anyone and everyone involved with voting, elections, and government in Afghanistan that a sound legal framework is required. There are lively national debates on the progress of two laws that will create an improved legal framework for our elections—both laws have been passed by the upper and lower Houses of Parliament but still need Presidential approval.

If the President doesn’t approve the election laws in the next few days or weeks, the elections will go ahead according to the Presidential Decree that was used in 2010. We know from bitter experience how flawed that legislative decree is. Afghan civil society and our international partners have worked hard to try to make sure we have an improved legal framework, including an independent electoral commission and an electoral complaints process. But time is running out to ensure that happens.

One positive sign is that operational preparations are taking place months earlier than in previous rounds—for example, the Afghan security forces announcing their plans in good time, including polling station locations. Voter registration is taking place—while initial indicators reveal low women’s participation, this is an area the Afghan Government with the support of the international community can prioritize and rectify.

One of the most pressing challenges is that the Presidential elections will take place within a matter of months and the appointment of the chairman for the Independent Elections Commission has yet to be announced. The IEC is at the front and center of elections. Without a credible leader in place, who has a proven independence and an established record, and is driven, committed, and capable, the election commission will struggle to build the necessary confidence with the public.

To counter these challenges and to ensure Afghanistan is given the fighting chance it deserves to hold free and fair elections, there are a few actions to consider:

(1) All efforts should be made to make sure that appointment of the IEC commissioners and in particular the chairperson are made through transparent and consultative means so that the next IEC will be perceived as credible and can perform independently of the executive.

(2) While the United States cannot support an individual candidate, it should not shy away from supporting democratic parties, platforms, and institutions so that there is a level playing field. It should continue to stress the need for noninterference by the Afghan executive in the electoral processes, and fair access to the media.

(3) The United States should continue to insist on the elections being held on time and according to the Afghan Constitution, and continue to support and strengthen the IEC’s antifraud measures and capacities so that they can manage a smooth post-election period.

(4) All efforts should be made to facilitate the deployment of international election observers as well as supporting domestic electoral observers like my group—the Free and Fair Elections Foundation of Afghanistan (FEFA), not just through the 2014 elections, but through the 2015 elections and beyond.

(5) By 2014 the Afghan security forces will have sole responsibility for security, including the polling centers. With a small contingency force NATO and U.S. forces can provide confidence, and if required can assist with small but important tasks

should an emergency arise—such as providing the IEC logistical support for deployment of electoral material.

Doha, the Threat of the Taliban Emirate, and a Real Path to Peace

The people of Afghanistan want peace, not appeasement. The United States should not be giving any sense of false legitimacy or credibility to a terrorist group, or to Pakistan's games. When the "political office" of the Taliban was opened in Doha it sent a signal to Afghans that the United States was not committed to working with the representative Government of Afghanistan.

This uncertainty about the position and priorities of the United States is dangerous for a number of reasons. Firstly because it distracts the highest levels of the U.S. Government from helping to ensure a smooth and viable political transition, and sidelined negotiations over the Bilateral Security Agreement. The message that Doha sent can lead to hedging behavior by Afghans, which can be very destabilizing.

Second, it emboldened the Taliban. The audacity of the Taliban flying a flag of the "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan" was shocking for Afghans, and exposed clearly their vision of themselves as the rightful rulers of our people. They may have temporarily closed down their office to protest demands that they stop calling themselves the Emirate, but that again shows how central to their movement is this notion of themselves as a "government in waiting."

The Taliban have not become a "moderate" group, they remain draconian, highly ideological and are, in fact, becoming more and more extreme in their attacks on innocent civilians. The Taliban have never categorically said that they will respect human rights and women's rights, or that they are committed to furthering the progress in this field. Nor do they show any sign that they are ready to engage in the political process—which would mean respecting a (man-made) constitution, and accepting defeat at a ballot box.

U.S. actions in Doha, therefore, risk undermining the proud sovereignty and fragile authority of the Afghan Government. As this Afghan Government has been supported by the United States, it also undermines the credibility of American foreign policy.

This is not to say that we in Afghanistan are against the Taliban joining mainstream politics. We would welcome that with tears of joy—there are one or two former Taliban who participate peacefully in our Parliament—more would be welcome. However, we cannot entertain a political process wherein the Taliban refuses to denounce violence, rejects the constitution, and maintains relations with al-Qaeda and other dangerous regional networks.

The United States should also be very wary of playing into Pakistan's hands, in particular the designs of the Pakistani military, which treats the Afghan people as expendable pawns in their bigger contest with India.

Throughout the past decade there have been genuine efforts by the Afghan Government and its international partners—including the United States—to gain the support of the Pakistani Government in a peace process, but hard facts suggest that elements in the Pakistani state continue to prove that they are not faithful partners.

The Government of Afghanistan has also until recently failed to provide a clear path toward peace. They do not seem to have a clear sense of the end goal, they allow multiple tracks and institutions to engage in the process, creating confusion among the people, and among those elements within the Taliban that might be serious about peace. The government has also failed to build a consensus among different sectors of society about a path to peace—a precursor to an inclusive and sustainable peace process.

Such a process is likely to take time and patience. Those who are rushing to this track seem to feel that the alternative is civil war. Most Afghans fear the shadow of civil war, but it is far from inevitable. We must ask you not to look at Afghanistan with the lens of the 1990s where the only contest is between the warlords and the Taliban.

The new Afghanistan is changed—citizens want jobs for themselves and schools to be built for their children. This Decade of Transition has exposed even our warlords to far more attractive horizons—where peace and prosperity have been made possible. The overwhelming majority of Afghans does not identify with warlords or the Taliban—and will not be carried by either group—but are forging new political identities and platforms.

We need to focus on the great test of the constitution that lies ahead of us in 2014—because really the political settlement is the constitution. Building upon it, building upon the center, and upon the wishes of the majority, is the real and the sustainable path to peace. Anything else is short-lived and will not ensure lasting peace for the people.

If we have a new government, which reaffirms our commitment to our constitutional order, backed by the Strategic Partnership Agreement and a new Bilateral Security Agreement, we create the right incentives for the Taliban and Pakistan to rethink their strategy. I'm confident that these conditions might lead to a Pakistani and Taliban strategy that is more conducive to peace.

What can be done, at this point, when so many mistakes have been made?

(1) The U.S.G—in particular the office of the Special Representative, Ambassador Dobbins—should focus on political transition in this critical moment. The next Afghan Government will have a far stronger mandate and the energy to play this role.

(2) The United States should immediately halt any talks or preliminary negotiations with the Taliban until the latter has expressed firm commitment to engage with the Afghan Government.

(3) The United States should not engage in any talks or preliminary negotiations until the Taliban cease their deliberate attacks on civilians. "Talking while fighting" may be common in many peace processes, it is not standard practice to talk while one side is consistently carrying out what might amount to war crimes.

(4) If talks do begin in earnest, the U.S. priority should be working with the government to secure firm commitments from the Taliban that they would renounce violence and seek power through the democratic system, they would respect the Afghan Constitution, respect human rights, in particular women's rights, including women's right to work and participate in the political system.

Cementing the Security Transition Will Preserve Gains and Provide Lasting Stability

Let me now take a closer look at the achievements and challenges of our security transition. In October 2012, Afghanistan exceeded its goal of having a 350,000-troops strong Afghan National Security Forces. Many Afghans want to join the ANSF to defend their own country. This is a magnificent achievement—just 6 years ago the total ANSF was not even 80,000 and recruitment was a problem.

With this impressive force, Afghan leaders have been able to take responsibility for leading security in Afghanistan, with less and less reliance on the NATO-led International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF). This shift toward Afghan leadership has not been accomplished overnight and has not been easy. But as an Afghan whenever I see our young men and some women in uniform I feel secure and proud, Mr. Chairman. For most Afghans in their 30s and older are seeing this uniformed national security force, carrying their country's flag, for the first time in their lives. Our forces show steady improvements in their capacity and their courage, as demonstrated by recent attacks in our capital that were swiftly closed down with minimal disturbance for our citizens.

The people of Afghanistan welcomed the successful completion of transition. However, we recognize that these achievements come despite enormous challenges that still need to be addressed. There is still great doubt as to whether ANSF is capable of continuing this progress after 2014, given the challenges we face. For example, without "coalition enabler" support, there is a risk that the ANSF are facing severe limitations. The Afghan Air Force is not yet in place, and air capacity is just at the beginning of development. Our people want to be in the Air Force, but they need time to develop the technical skills required. In addition, a basic essential service like medical evacuation is not yet in place. With a high attrition rate and literacy levels requiring time to improve, the ANSF is under great pressure. There are also shortcomings in transportation, logistics, and equipment. Technical knowledge, like counter-IED and military intelligence is growing, but slowly.

On top of all this, our brave forces are not yet supported by a commander in chief they deserve. A number of military officers told me that morale is significantly affected because their commander in chief still cannot define who the enemy is, and who his brother is. Mr. Chairman, we are aware as Afghans that the task of choosing the right commander in chief is solely ours, and I am confident that the nation has learned hard lessons to be able to make the right decision in this coming election. We Afghans know our forces are now fighting bravely, sacrificing themselves, being killed and wounded, for the defense of their own country. But they need continuing help. They need help not just to keep fighting, but to make sure that they are a responsible, accountable military that works for the good of the people, and that dangers such as corruption, abuse of the people and seeking political power do not arise. Both Afghans and Americans want an Afghan military that we can be proud of.

Finalizing the Bilateral Security Agreement is of paramount importance. It will give confidence in the political and ensuing economic transition. It will mutually benefit Afghanistan and the United States as the partnership against terrorism is cemented, and it will preserve the gains we worked so hard for and sacrificed so

much for in the past decade. At this point, Afghans want to be assured of the U.S. commitment to Afghan independence, security, and respect for the constitution. In return, the Afghan people will partner with the United States in building a country that is a productive part of the world community and an ally in an uncertain region. The Afghan Government will afford the United States access to military bases and partner with the United States in necessary counterterror operations. Afghans from different walks of life have echoed their endorsement of the strategic partnership between Afghanistan and the United States, including a Loya Jirga and the Afghan Parliament. The rhetoric, Mr. Chairman, which you hear from some of our political leaders, is far from what the majority of Afghans desire. Most of those I speak with—not just the educated elites but average rural Afghans in remote parts—are voicing their strong sense of anxiety, caused by delays in signing of the BSA. We want to move forward with the United States as our primary ally.

Based on this brief outline, there are a few steps to be taken to support the security transition:

- (1) Prioritize signing a Bilateral Security Agreement.
- (2) As part of the Chicago Commitment, provide resources and technical support to the Afghan Air Force for the time necessary.
- (3) Maintain the minimum level of international air power support until the Afghan Air Force and medical evacuation teams are ready to take on the job themselves.
- (4) Continue to provide the necessary advice, support, training and capacity-building for the ANSF through 2014 and beyond from literacy campaigns, to recruiting all ethnicities and women, to technical vocations, so that the ANSF becomes and remains a professional and responsible military.
- (5) As committed to in the Strategic Partnership and by NATO in Chicago last year, maintain the financial and material support necessary for the continued development of the institution of the army, police and intelligence.

In the last several years many Afghans like myself have been enormously reassured to see the great strides our military has taken, and remain indebted to the United States and our NATO allies for their assistance in training and financing our security forces. We appreciate that there must be a limit to this heavy burden for you, and this is not a request for open ended support, but we humbly request that you continue your support until the ANSF can not only manage, but truly lead security across the country.

While I stress the importance of our military becoming a capable, well-resourced and trusted institution, I recognize that we need an equally capable and well-resourced civilian government, in order to avoid the fate of some countries in our region.

After this decade-long strategic partnership, with all its successes and sacrifices, now is not the moment to squander the achievements and possibilities that are within reach today, because of short-term frustrations or gains. Nor is it the moment to chase after quick deals, when we're so close to getting a new government with a fresh mandate, which will be capable of bringing all Afghans with it to reach a lasting and inclusive peace.

Thank you, Senator Menendez and all the committee members for your continued engagement and interest, and for giving me the opportunity to provide frank testimony at this important time.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, thank you all for your testimony.

We have a universal agreement that these elections are very important. Now, if you had the power, Mr. Hadley, to say this is what the United States should be doing right now with the Afghan Government to ensure the most honest, transparent, and fair elections possible, what would your answer be?

Mr. HADLEY. We need to put pressure on President Karzai but really to encourage all aspects of the Afghan system to put pressure on Karzai and the Parliament to get this legislation enacted and to get the people appointed. That is point one.

Secondly, we in our statements have to make it clear that this election is the top priority. I think a lot of Afghans thought that reconciliation with the Taliban was our top priority. This should be our top priority. It is our top priority. We have not made that clear.

Third, I would agree the election needs to be part of a broad-based reconciliation with all aspects of Afghan society which largely feel alienated. That is what this election can do. That will empower the Afghan Government. At that point after the election, an empowered government supported by its people, having international import, backed up by an army that is willing to fight for that government, then you can talk about having some conversation with Taliban to see those that are willing to come out of the fight and give up violence and then let the Afghan Army deal with the rest.

And I think at that point, Pakistan will accept that deal. Pakistan, I think, has given up the notion that the Taliban are going to take over in Afghanistan. I think Pakistan now feels that an unstable Afghanistan threatens Pakistan which is seeing a high level of violence, and I think that Pakistan will lower its objective and accept some kind of outcome as long as there is some kind of Taliban role.

But the critical thing will be to have, you said, an empowered, fairly elected, legitimate government supported by the Afghan people that can reconcile all of Afghan society. That is the critical element to achieve the things that Mr. Nadery has talked about.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Nadery, I appreciate hearing the words "thank you" because that is something President Karzai never seems to be able to say.

With reference to your own view, what would you want the United States to do to help you achieve the type of elections that the Afghan people will have faith in?

Mr. NADERY. Well, I will endorse what Mr. Hadley said just about the election, but to add on that is one of the critical things is the type of messages that both the Afghan political leadership and the public receives starting with raising the bar higher than what was discussed in the past. It means emphasize, as much as you can, on those processes and the principle of those processes, which means what kind of a free election and fair election you want to see being there. That message needs to remain consistent throughout. We were grateful to hear recently that Secretary Kerry changed the message from "credible" election to making it specific, "free and fair." That matters especially before the election. So do not raise the bar lower. Keep it high—as high as is possible before the election so it can send the message to those who are preparing for whatever possible end of the election to not be there.

Second, continue the technical assistance both to the institution of the Election Commission, especially on the fraud mitigation measures. There are a large number of expertise and lessons learned in the past. That needs to be translated there in action to those in institution, including make sure that you are pressing for more international observers, including support for domestic election observers on the ground, but the election issue needs to remain a consistent priority and the messages that go need to match those issues of priority coming from your government to our government and our President. So no preparation or plots that are being in some corner of our government for a delay of the election or a cancelation of the election to work.

The CHAIRMAN. I would like to ask this to all of you, more of a comment. You know, I read the article in the New York Times and I said this is certainly unfortunate and not positive. By the same token, I think that President Karzai somehow thinks that he has some leverage with us over this issue. Somehow he thinks that a zero option is not a possibility, so therefore we will have to somewhat be held over the barrel at the end of the day to what is this final negotiating opportunity. And I think the one thing that he should understand is that that is not beyond the possibility if we cannot get a bilateral security agreement.

How do we disabuse President Karzai of the belief that this is something to negotiate with? I mean, negotiating an agreement is understandable, but there is a difference between negotiating an agreement and using the agreement as an effort to leverage whatever he is seeking personally for his future, his security living in Afghanistan, what comes along with his influence, whatever. I get a sense that the flip side of this—we talk about the United States not making it clear, and I think we should make it all clear. I think we have made it very clear that we intend to stay. By the same token, we cannot be held hostage by President Karzai.

Mr. Hadley.

Mr. HADLEY. It may have started by someone as an effort to kind of negotiate with Karzai and to say, you know, we really could pull them all out. The problem is the multiple audience problem and it dismayed the rest of the country and caused a loss of confidence. And so that I think was a terrible mistake.

I think he is using the bilateral security agreement, and that is why my suggestion is to make a clear commitment of a specific, substantial number, say this is what we are going to do to reassure the rest of the country, and then say to Karzai, and we would love to negotiate it with you, but if we cannot negotiate it with you, we will negotiate it with the folks who come in after the election. That takes the stick away from him and takes the leverage away from him.

And I think the combination of those two things, in the end of the day, will lead him to come to the table and negotiate an agreement because I think he wants that to be part of his legacy. I do not think he wants to leave it to the next government.

So that is what I would try, but it is a very frustrating situation, but that is what I would try.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Chayes.

Ms. CHAYES. Yes, thank you and I am going to have to go in just a minute.

I would just like to second that. In fact, I would not say maybe we would do it after. I would just pause those negotiations. I would do the same thing, say the intent of the United States is to leave a troop presence after 2014 in the order of X, but we will resume these negotiations after the election.

Mr. NADERY. I fully agree with both of the speakers on that front. But just to add again and reemphasize the point that you hear an entirely different message from the rest of the Afghans, including the Afghan Parliament, compared to what President Karzai says. There is an overwhelming majority of support for the bilateral security agreement endorsement and adoption. And therefore,

it needs to be a multilayer of messaging and engagement both with the Afghan Parliament and also with other stakeholders on the ground. And therefore, not to pause the bilateral security agreement negotiation. It needs to continue with the knowledge that a “no” answer should not come, making a clear message and communication to the President that if he is not signing it, the next administration with the popular support of the public are going to achieve and it will not be his legacy but will be a legacy of the next government which will have the popular support of the public.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Kaine, if you have a question for Ms. Chayes, if you would give it to her first because she has got a speaking engagement and she has been hanging in here.

Senator KAINE. I will. And, Mr. Chair, you asked all my questions almost. But just a threshold one and maybe Ms. Chayes could start first.

Just a threshold question. You know, what is your perception about the degree of support in the Afghan population for a United States residual force post-2014?

Ms. CHAYES. I would agree with Mr. Nadery. Very high.

Senator KAINE. Mr. Nadery.

Mr. NADERY. Well, a good indication of looking into that would be all the discussion that have happened when there was a final decision was going to be made at the time on the strategy partnership agreement. The overwhelming support on the floor in the Afghan Parliament, the overwhelming discussion and support throughout Afghan civil society and broader in the provinces in support of the strategy partnership is a very clear indication of a continued partnership with the United States.

Whenever there is a discussion about a zero troop option or a withdrawal, you hear a higher degree and a higher sense of anxiety and fear in the Afghan population. That creates further uncertainty about their future, and that need itself makes and drives a lot of support for a residual number of troops on the ground. And that need to be looked in a way that it needs to be—if the numbers are not coming right away, but at least it need to be announced in a way that it is tailored to the needs on the ground. If insecurity increases significantly and Afghan forces are fighting hard but needs more support, that number of troops will be tailored that way. And definitely we hope that we take more responsibility. We are going to fight for our own country and, therefore, the numbers will be corresponding to those needs for the support role in those areas that we need. At this stage, the numbers will definitely make a huge psychological confidence-boosting and building role.

Senator KAINE. And the last question, Mr. Hadley, because you have really already answered the question I just asked in your written testimony. But in Afghanistan, sort of what I heard was the two bad narratives would be United States abandonment or United States occupation. And so what we are doing is attempting to establish a residual force that is clearly not an occupying force and that is clearly not an abandonment strategy. From your professional judgment based on what you are hearing in terms of the military leadership about what the size of that force would be, which is sort of a combined U.S.-NATO force, is the kind of range

you are hearing discussed a range that you generally feel is acceptable?

Mr. HADLEY. I think the word is it is an “enabling” force that enables the Afghans to take full responsibility. That is how we should see it.

I think it should be mission-driven, not just an abstract number. Ron Neumann, who is our former Ambassador, tried to do that. He did sort of a mission-driven.

I have a lot of respect for General Mattis, and my guess is that if you do that mission-driven, which probably he did it, you know, you are at a number that in the 15,000, not in the 9,000. And if you add 4,000 or 5,000 NATO troops, which is what people are talking about, that gets you a 20,000 number. That ought to be probably roughly adequate to do the mission. But again, I am no mission planner, but you asked me to read the tea leaves. That is kind of how I read them.

Senator Kaine. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, thank you both for your testimony. It was invaluable. Thank you for traveling all the way from Afghanistan on short notice to be here. It was very helpful, insightful.

The record will remain open till the close of business tomorrow for any members who wish to submit questions.

And with the thanks of the committee, this hearing is adjourned. [Whereupon, at 12:03 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

RESPONSES OF SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE JAMES DOBBINS TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. Afghanistan’s elections in 2014 and the ensuing political transition are a critical piece in the success of the security transition to Afghan forces. Without free, fair, transparent, and credible elections, many of the efforts and sacrifices made by so many Americans and Afghans will have been for naught.

- What can the United States do better to convince Afghans that the 2014 elections and political transition is our top priority in Afghanistan?
- In your opinion, what would constitute a “credible” election to the Afghan people?

Answer. The 2014 elections are the top political priority for our mission in Kabul and our diplomats understand that the 2014 Presidential election will determine the future stability of Afghanistan and the region. The Embassy regularly consults with Afghans throughout the country and stresses the importance of a successful political transition. Assistant Chief of Mission Ambassador David Robinson is the Embassy’s primary point of contact on elections. He meets almost daily with Afghan Government officials, political party leaders, Afghan National Security Force commanders, civil society, and international partners to assess progress on elections and deliver consistent U.S. policy messages on all aspects of planning for this historic event. Secretary Kerry, who has direct experience with Afghanistan’s 2009 Presidential election, has made the 2014 political transition one of his top priorities. He has raised this issue in all his conversations and meetings with President Karzai and other high-level Afghan officials, most recently in Kabul in March and in Brussels in May, as Deputy Secretary Burns did during his May visit to Kabul. I also discussed the elections during my meeting with President Karzai on May 29.

Ultimately, Afghans themselves will have to determine what constitutes a “credible” election. However, the general sense we see is that Afghans want a free, fair, inclusive and unifying election that reflects the will of the people and reaffirms Afghanistan’s democratic progress and the Afghan people’s strong desire for a future shaped by democratic politics, not violence. Increased participation and reduced

fraud will help to ensure a credible result. It is up to the Afghan people to elect a President they hope will best represent all of Afghanistan.

Question. As we saw in Iraq, a coordinated interagency transition strategy for Afghanistan will be critical to avoid the risk of duplication or working at cross-purposes. Additionally, oversight of U.S. reconstruction funding is a priority in transition planning. For example, USAID intends to use third-party monitors to oversee its programs and projects, although we don't have data to know whether this would be a reliable mechanism.

- Does the U.S. Government have a coordinated interagency strategy for transition in Afghanistan? If so, who is in charge of this planning effort? Is it coordinated with coalition partners and the Afghan Government? Has it applied lessons learned from Iraq?
- Is oversight of civilian assistance being considered in transition planning? If so, specifically how are the State Department and USAID making oversight a priority?

Answer. The term "transition" in Afghanistan refers to a number of separate but interrelated processes occurring over the next 2 years and beyond. We often cite the security, political, and economic transitions as the three key issues for U.S. foreign policy in Afghanistan. In addition, the internal USG transition from a military-led to a civilian-led effort in Afghanistan is a critical priority and creates a large number of required actions and challenges, including planning for ongoing operations, management of assistance, and continuation of necessary diplomatic engagement. Given the broad and complex nature of these transitions, no single strategic document covers all aspects of the issue. Overarching strategic documents, including the U.S.-Afghan Strategic Partnership and the Civil-Military Strategic Framework, provide guidance to our efforts in support of the various transitions. In addition, the National Security Staff hosts regular interagency policy meetings to develop strategic guidance on transition issues.

Earlier this year, in order to consolidate the policy and management aspects of the upcoming transitions into a single entity, Embassy Kabul combined the existing Transition Office, which was under the Coordinating Director for Development and Economic Affairs, and the Management Transition Office into a single Transition Office. The new office, led by two Senior Foreign Service officers, reports directly to the Ambassador and covers all aspects of transition including coordination with other agencies, other countries, coalition military, and the Afghan Government.

The implementation and oversight of civilian assistance programs is a central part of our ongoing transition planning. The Embassy Transition Office is working closely with all U.S. implementing agencies and plans to systematically review existing assistance programs to assess how they contribute to our foreign policy goals and examine whether and how they will continue to operate after the 2014 security transition. A key question in this analysis is whether the implementing agency will be able to provide adequate oversight and monitoring with potentially less access to project sites outside of Kabul. The Transition Office has developed, and the Ambassador set as Embassy-wide policy, a forward-looking program monitoring and oversight framework that envisions using third-party monitoring as a tool to support, but not replace, inherently governmental oversight functions. The Mission Policy on Monitoring and Evaluation directs agencies and sections to establish clear mechanisms for effective monitoring post-2014, and specific tripwires for deciding when projects should be postponed, put on hold, or terminated. The Embassy continually reevaluates projects and programs based on these criteria. USAID, INL, and other offices are currently building their post-2014 portfolios and, with the help of advanced planning, are integrating multilayered and technological solutions to address the upcoming implementation and monitoring challenges. For example, USAID has developed an innovative remote monitoring policy that incorporates best practices from other challenging operating environments, such as Iraq and Pakistan. The new policy calls for a multilayered approach that uses third-party monitors, technology including satellite imagery and mobile technology, surveys, and other methods to augment the monitoring information available to government oversight officials.

In addition, Embassy Kabul has merged the two coordination offices, the Coordinating Director for Development and Economic Assistance (CDDEA) and the Coordinating Director for Rule of Law and Law Enforcement (CDROLLE) into one Coordination Directorate. This merger will further enhance synergies between the multiple agencies and sections working in Afghanistan and provide overarching policy direction in a whole-of-government approach. It will further facilitate and enhance the Embassy coordination with the military as security transition proceeds through its final phase. This new office will also coordinate oversight and moni-

toring across the various agencies in accordance with the aforementioned Embassy-wide policy. While each agency and section has unique authorities and responsibilities for oversight of their programs, the Coordination Directorate will ensure that maximum efficiencies and effectiveness are achieved across the various programs.

Though the transition processes in Iraq and Afghanistan are different in a number of significant ways, we agree that there are lessons to be learned from our experiences during the transition in Iraq. As such, we have facilitated regular conversations between the offices covering Iraq and Afghanistan in the Department of State and USAID to identify best practices. For instance, we learned from our Iraq experience to begin planning early and to establish clear implementing roles for each agency. As a result we started major planning for the Afghanistan transition early last year, more than 2 years in advance of the security transition, and we have defined a clear mission for the Department of State, USAID and the Department of Defense in the Strategic Partnership Agreement and in policy statements from President Obama and other administration leadership. We also have purposefully sought out veterans of the Iraq transition to fill key positions in the Department and at USAID overseeing the transition process in Afghanistan. In addition, we have increased collaboration with the Afghan Government and civil society in the design of our assistance programs to improve sustainability.

Question. In recent months, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction has issued a number of troubling reports about our reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. Through its audit and inspection work, SIGAR has identified numerous examples in which the United States created a program or built a facility without consideration as to whether the Afghan Government could sustain it.

- Which programs and projects funded by the State Department and USAID are least likely to be sustained by the Afghan Government?
- What steps is your office taking to respond to the many problems SIGAR has identified and increase oversight responsibilities of civilian assistance in Afghanistan?

Answer. As we approach the 2014 security transition the emphasis of all of our civilian assistance programs is shifting toward sustainable development and away from the construction of infrastructure and quick impact projects designed to achieve immediate stabilization impacts. Our goal is to achieve sustainable, positive results in Afghanistan without disproportionately increasing the future burden on the Afghan Government. In fact, the majority of Department of State and many USAID programs are not provided through the government and will not require any sustainment effort from the government. For example, we are investing in the empowerment of Afghan women and providing significant support to the Afghan private sector. Of course, some of our previous and future investments including work to improve infrastructure, health, and education services, and other programs will require support from the Afghan Government in order for the benefits to be sustained. We work closely with the Afghan Government as programs are designed, implemented, and completed to ensure the government has the necessary capacity to maintain these programs, understands the costs associated with them, and has committed to provide the necessary resources. It is our goal to ensure that each major investment in civilian assistance is followed up with the resources necessary to maintain the progress that U.S. assistance has facilitated over the last decade.

We welcome the role played by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) in identifying weaknesses in our reconstruction programming and the potential for misuse of funds and offering solutions. We appreciate the insightful recommendations provided in SIGAR audit reports and in each case seriously review recommendations and how we can best apply them. We respond to each SIGAR audit report with specific comments on recommended actions and in most cases describe how we will or have already implemented recommendations. Additionally, when SIGAR provides actionable information, we take action. We share SIGAR's goal of safeguarding U.S. taxpayer resources from fraud, waste, and abuse, and are committed to the most effective uses of those resources in advancing our Nation's national security through assistance programs in Afghanistan.

RESPONSES OF SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE JAMES DOBBINS TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.

Question. On July 9, the Senate unanimously passed S. Res. 151 which urges the Secretary of State to condition financial, logistical, and political support for Afghanistan's 2014 elections based on the implementation of reforms in Afghanistan including—

- Increased efforts to encourage women’s participation in the electoral process, including provisions to ensure their full access to and security at polling stations;
- The implementation of measures to prevent fraudulent registration and manipulation of the voting or counting processes; and,
- Prompt passage of legislation through the Parliament of Afghanistan that codifies the authorities and independence of the IEC and an independent and impartial election complaints mechanism.

How would you assess progress on each of these measures?

Answer. The Independent Election Commission (IEC) has made a concerted effort to mainstream its gender strategy in its overall operational plan for the 2014 elections. For example, in preparation for the upcoming elections in 2014, the IEC Gender Unit has been actively involved in ensuring that gender is taken into consideration in all of IEC’s electoral work. Despite challenges concerning the capacity of the Gender Unit, the IEC has undertaken strategies to encourage female voters to register, as well as to increase the female staff at IEC headquarters and provinces to conduct voter registration. The IEC continues to engage influential leaders, including religious leaders and women’s networks, to create awareness about the importance of women’s participation in the electoral process. The IEC has made clear that it will develop targeted messages for female voters and that it will ensure that gender is taken into account in all of its messaging, in order to promote a gender-sensitive voter education approach. This is intended to promote inclusiveness and transparency in the electoral processes, and to safeguard the fundamental right to vote for all eligible women voters. Similarly, with regards to staffing, the IEC is putting into place measures to ensure women’s active role in the election administration structures, including: female trainers; female voter educators; and voter registration and polling staff.

We are working closely with the Afghan authorities to support their efforts to implement safeguards to prevent fraud, address fraud where it occurs, and improve people’s ability to cast their ballots freely. The IEC’s Operational Plan includes strengthened fraud mitigation procedures, developed from lessons learned from past electoral cycles. Some of these procedures, which the IEC is actively implementing, include: improved monitoring and tracking of ballots and ballot boxes; transparent vote counting and distribution of preliminary tally sheets at polling centers, and; double-blind counting procedures.

A credible legal framework will help ensure a good election as well as the full legal participation of all Afghans. The establishment of an electoral framework through broad consultation and compromise is critical. Separate joint committees of the two Houses of Parliament are currently reconciling competing versions of the IEC Structure Law and Electoral Law. Parliamentarians are confident that they will be able to reconcile the laws and pass them for President Karzai’s signature before Parliament’s July 23 recess. We look forward to President Karzai’s approval of both laws, and the swift implementation of these laws. We will continue to support Afghanistan’s independent electoral institutions, civil society, and the people as they prepare for these elections and take the necessary next steps to advance the electoral process and ensure independent and credible appointments to the IEC and Electoral Complaints Commission.

Question. Since the creation of the Special Representative’s office (SRAP), I have been concerned that we have been paying insufficient attention to India-Pakistan dimensions in the region. Our bureaucracy has created artificial silos so that the Afghanistan and Pakistan offices at the State Department and USAID are separated from the rest of South Asia, even though there are technically bureaucratic linkages between them (i.e., dual-hatted positions).

- What steps will you take to ensure greater coordination and integration of efforts regarding our Pakistan and India policies and personnel?

Answer. Our relationships with India and Pakistan are both vital components of U.S. foreign policy in Asia. The President has identified our relationship with India as one of the defining partnerships for the 21st century, a partnership that is a key to our Rebalance in Asia. Our relationship with Pakistan is also of prime importance to our efforts to promote regional stability and economic prosperity. These two relationships both stand on their own merits, and we seek to ensure that productive engagements with each country do not come at the expense of the other. Nevertheless, we also recognize that Pakistan and India have their own bilateral relationship, and the progress of that relationship is vital to U.S. interests in the region. We are encouraged by the positive tone that has emerged in recent months regarding relations between the two countries, and hope that this progress continues,

including on normalizing trade policies and economic engagement, security issues, and people-to-people exchanges.

In order to advance our objectives in the region, SRAP works hand-in-hand with colleagues in the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs (SCA) to shape policy and coordinate messaging. In fact, a number of these officers have firsthand experience working with or in both India and Pakistan. We also work closely with our interagency colleagues, including the Department of Defense, the National Security Staff, and the U.S. Agency for International Development, to ensure a diversity of viewpoints and analytical techniques enhances our ability to address regional issues in a holistic manner.

RESPONSES OF SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE JAMES DOBBINS TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JEFF FLAKE

Question #1. The Washington Post reported on July 9 that, “In northern Afghanistan, the State Department last year abandoned plans to occupy a large building it had intended to use as a consulate. After spending more than \$80 million and signing a 10-year lease, officials determined the facility was too vulnerable to attacks.” The report also details a \$34 million new military headquarters in Afghanistan that “commanders in the area, who insisted 3 years ago that they did not need the building, now are in the process of withdrawing forces and see no reason to move into the new facility.” This example, in addition to the other egregious examples of wasted taxpayer dollars outlined in the report are unfortunately reminiscent of what we saw with regard to Iraq reconstruction projects, as well.

- a. After commanders in the area said 3 years ago that they had no interest in the facility, why was construction continued on it? Who foisted the building on those commanders? What was the decisionmaking process on this and who was ultimately responsible for approving construction of the facility?

Answer. This question is not within the purview of the Department of State. The Department defers to the Department of Defense to respond.

- b. Three years ago when this facility began construction, discussions about withdrawal from Afghanistan had already begun inside the administration. What considerations were given to any potential withdrawal when plans to construct this facility began?

Answer. This question is not within the purview of the Department of State. The Department of State defers to the Department of Defense to respond.

- c. How is the State Department using the lessons learned from Iraq reconstruction to put a better, less expensive foot forward in post-war Afghanistan?

Answer. The White House has not yet determined the scale and shape of the post-2014 footprint. However, in developing the possible options, the State Department has incorporated lessons learned from Iraq to ensure we leverage existing U.S. Government capabilities where possible. We have established an Executive Steering Group with the Department of Defense to coordinate planning efforts, logistics requirements, and possible solutions for potential areas of concern.

- d. Are the Departments of Defense and State collaborating on the use of existing infrastructure in Afghanistan to minimize costs going forward?

Answer. Yes, the Department of State and Department of Defense continue to work closely, including through the colocation of civilian staff with military forces throughout Afghanistan. Post-2014 plans are based on military support to the civilian mission, leveraging existing infrastructure where possible for cost savings, in order to provide those critical functions or services that civilian agencies cannot perform themselves.

- e. To what degree is the State Department consulting the Government of Afghanistan over what its infrastructure needs are and what it can support?

Answer. The State Department has no plans to transfer any of its existing civilian facilities to the Government of Afghanistan; however, the United States remains committed to ensuring the Afghans have the required capacity to properly maintain facilities constructed by U.S. development programs.

Question #2. The Inspectors General for Reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan, respectively, have identified many projects that spent millions of U.S. taxpayer dollars and yet despite these investments, the projects have failed or are near failure. In Iraq, for example, a wastewater treatment plant built in Fallujah “was constructed at great cost but to little effect,” according to the Inspector General, serv-

ing, “only a fraction of those intended.” That project cost \$99.8 million. In Afghanistan, the Inspector General found that an investment of \$18.5 million by USAID in two hospitals “may not be the most economical and practical use of funds,” because “USAID did not fully assess the Ministry of Public Health’s ability to operate and maintain these new facilities once completed.”

- a. To what degree is consideration given to the host country’s ability to maintain facilities such as these when the United States turns them over?

Answer. As Afghanistan becomes more stable, assistance activities in Afghanistan are shifting from shorter-term stabilization activities to efforts increasingly focused on systematic, long-term improvements that are Afghan-led and sustainable. The Department of State and USAID are committed to ensuring that assistance programs achieve sustainable results in Afghanistan. Likewise, we share the Afghan Government’s goal of increasing Afghanistan’s self reliance and decreasing the country’s dependence on foreign aid. The ability of the recipient government to maintain U.S. Government-constructed facilities is among the first questions asked in the program design process and a required discussion with recipient government counterparts. A number of laws, regulations and guidance documents require project sustainability be considered prior to project initiation. The international donor community and the Afghan Government are taking more concerted steps to build capacity of the Afghan Government to operate and maintain facilities. This includes an initiative through the World Bank’s Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund to incentivize policy and operational reforms and encourage increased domestic spending on operations and maintenance (O&M). The Ministry of Public Health is to be one of the first ministries to benefit from this program, as it has made substantial progress to meet O&M demands. This progress includes the development of a norms-based O&M policy, an asset registry, and demonstrating increased O&M spending. Although it was not in place at the time these hospitals were conceived, we use the USAID Administrator’s 2011 Sustainability Guidance as an initial tool to ensure current U.S. Government programs achieve sustainable results. In fact, the annual foreign operations appropriation requires that the Secretary of State certify, prior to the obligation of funding, that funds will be used to support programs in accordance with the Administrator’s Sustainability Guidance. In addition, section 611 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and the recently enacted section 1273 of the FY 2013 National Defense Authorization Act require a sustainability assessment and determination prior to the obligation of foreign assistance funding for infrastructure projects. As a result of these provisions and in furtherance of our goal of reducing Afghan reliance on foreign aid, we have incorporated sustainability into project design processes, and all major infrastructure projects are now subject to a sustainability audit.

- b. Why didn’t USAID fully assess the ability of the Afghanistan Ministry of Public Health to manage this facility before it was constructed? Is this typical of the way USAID manages assistance projects?

Answer. In USAID’s response to Audit 13–9 by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) related to the construction of health facilities in Afghanistan, we noted our disagreement with the conclusion that the United States did not adequately consult with the Afghan Government prior to the construction of hospitals in Gardez and Khair Kot. The Afghan Ministry of Public Health was consulted throughout the construction cycle for both projects and has committed in writing to fund the operation and maintenance of both facilities after they are completed later this year. Furthermore, the Ministry of Public Health has made great strides in recent years in building its management and operational capacity. It successfully manages thousands of clinics around the country that provide health services to millions of Afghan citizens. We have no reason to believe the Ministry will not follow through on its pledge to manage these facilities and will continue to monitor to ensure Afghan officials are following through on their commitments.

- c. The transition in Afghanistan will be operating during a time of fiscal austerity in the United States. How do you anticipate that the declining budgets of State and USAID will affect these types of projects moving forward?

Answer. Following last year’s comprehensive review of the U.S. assistance portfolio in Afghanistan, it was decided that future assistance funds would focus more intensively than in the past on sustainable development, including inclusive economic growth and ensuring the Afghan Government has the necessary capacity to maintain the development gains achieved over the last 11 years. Examples of such programs include helping the National Highway Administration establish an operations and maintenance division. Health sector programs will focus on maintaining

the current level of nationwide health service provision and health professional training. No construction of new health facilities is planned.

- d. Will these projects be paid for using overseas contingency operations funds?

Answer. Per the draft FY 2013 653(a) allocations recently presented to Congress, all Economic Support Funds (ESF) resources for Afghanistan, except for programs in the family planning area, will come from the Overseas Contingency Operations account. Therefore, the administration will use these funds to support health and all other development programming. Afghanistan will require international assistance in the health sector for many years to come and we intend to continue our support for the health sector.

- e. Has there been any effort inside State and USAID to learn from past mistakes and avoid making them in the future?

Answer. Yes. We are constantly reviewing the results of past and current projects to derive lessons for our future operations. Every year we review each of our projects in Afghanistan and produce a report of performance and results. In addition, we conduct regular portfolio reviews to ensure our programs are well aligned with our ongoing mission and with the goals of the Afghan Government. We use the data from these reviews and reports to evaluate the effectiveness of our programs and to design better programs in the future. For example, USAID has put in place a new policy restricting the type of mechanisms that may be used for construction services to ensure maximum agency oversight of construction projects as these require a greater level of scrutiny in challenging security environments.

Question #3. Negotiations are underway for a bilateral security agreement between the United States and Afghanistan that would provide immunity for U.S. troops remaining in Afghanistan in a post-2014 environment. According to CRS, “observers report that negotiations have bogged down over Afghan demands for guarantees that the United States will adequately fund the ANSF for at least several years after 2014.”

- a. What kinds of guarantees is President Karzai looking for and what does he believe to be “adequate” funding for the ANSF?
- b. What is the administration’s position on providing funding for the ANSF and how much of a sticking point will that be in any ultimate agreement?

Answer. The Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) is another step in implementing our pledge to support a long-term partnership with Afghanistan as outlined in the Strategic Partnership Agreement, signed in May 2012, and evidenced through our statements at the Chicago NATO summit in May 2012 and the Tokyo International Conference on Afghanistan in July 2012. Since the launch of negotiations in November 2012, we have made significant progress on achieving agreement in order to conclude the BSA. We will not comment publicly with regard to ongoing negotiations as the positions evolve through discussions. Our BSA lead negotiator, Ambassador Warlick, has provided regular briefings to Members of Congress, and has plans to brief the Hill in the coming days prior to the August recess. I or my team would be happy to provide a briefing again at any point.

The United States supports the development of the capability and capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) to provide security and stability for Afghanistan. The administration has sought and Congress has provided annual appropriations through the Department of Defense to support ANSF development. The BSA is expected to be concluded as an executive agreement. As such, we are not discussing specific funding commitments as part of the BSA negotiations. Beyond 2014, as agreed in the Strategic Partnership Agreement, the administration will seek funds from Congress on a yearly basis—after discussing needs with the Afghan authorities—in order to support the agreed upon efforts.

These are not easy issues, but we continue to approach the negotiation in the spirit of partnership evidenced by our Strategic Partnership Agreement and our long-term commitment. We are working closely with the Afghans to develop a BSA that meets the needs of both our countries and confirms our enduring partnership for security and defense cooperation.

RESPONSES OF ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY PETER LAVOY TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

BILATERAL SECURITY AGREEMENT

Question. There are two oversight issues that I feel should be included in the final text of the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA). First, U.S. Government personnel

need to be allowed to oversee U.S.-funded programs and projects in Afghanistan and to monitor the use of direct assistance funds provided to the Afghan Government. If such provisions are not included, U.S. assistance to Afghanistan will be subject to significant risk of waste, fraud, and abuse. Second, U.S. negotiators should incorporate into the BSA a consistent, unified position on what the U.S. Government deems appropriate taxation of contractors supporting U.S. Government efforts in Afghanistan. A recent SIGAR audit report found that, since 2008, the Afghan Ministry of Finance has levied over \$921 million in business taxes, and associated penalties, on 43 contractors that support U.S. Government efforts in Afghanistan, even though the contractors should be exempt from most taxation under U.S. bilateral agreements with the Afghan Government.

- Are these oversight provisions being worked into the BSA, and if not, why not?

Answer. The Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) currently under negotiation with Afghanistan, like the current U.S.-Afghanistan Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), is an agreement that would provide a framework for DOD activities in Afghanistan after 2014. It would not cover the activities of any other U.S. department or agency. The BSA would preserve DOD's ability to conduct its activities, including provision and oversight of assistance to Afghanistan, in accordance with relevant U.S. laws and regulations. DOD remains strongly committed to its oversight responsibilities in Afghanistan, which include ensuring that any funds (such as Afghan Security Forces Fund funding) provided directly to the Government of Afghanistan by DOD are used appropriately and effectively to advance U.S. national security objectives.

United States global SOFA policy and practice are to seek and enforce exemptions from taxation on all DOD activities, including that no taxes or similar charges be assessed on articles and services acquired in the host country by or on behalf of United States forces. This flows directly from the principle that one sovereign nation does not tax another sovereign nation when partnering for mutual benefit. The BSA, like the 2003 SOFA, is being negotiated consistent with this global SOFA policy and practice. Taxation issues related to other U.S. Government contracts in Afghanistan, such as taxation of contractors that support activities of the Department of State, are addressed in other international agreements with the Afghan Government. We firmly believe that it is important that exemptions available under applicable international agreements are claimed for the benefit of the U.S. Government and U.S. taxpayer.

METRICS

Question. Even though the administration speaks positively about the security transition, opinions vary greatly about whether Afghans are actually safer. I hear from some contacts that security has deteriorated countrywide, civilian casualty rates are rising, and the insurgency is spreading.

- What metrics is ISAF using to measure if the transition is really working? Where can the committee find this information? Is ISAF still collecting statistics on violence rates and civilian casualties?

Answer. The Department of Defense (DOD) assesses success in Afghanistan by utilizing data from many sources, including reports from the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and U.S. intelligence agencies. Contrary to what you have heard, overall violence is down compared to last year. Civilian casualties have decreased significantly and insurgent influence over the populated areas of Afghanistan continues to decline. Our most comprehensive single metric for violence in Afghanistan is Enemy Initiated Attacks (EIAs). As of June 30, 2013, EIAs had declined 6 percent when compared to 2012. Additionally, as of June 30, 2013, improvised explosive device events were down 10 percent, and suicide attacks were down 23 percent compared to the previous year.

DOD's comprehensive assessment of the conflict in Afghanistan, the semiannual report to Congress on "Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan," draws from an array of security, governance, and economic metrics that provide an accurate and comprehensive picture of the overall situation in Afghanistan. These metrics include: improvised explosive device events, direct fire attacks, high-profile attacks, complex attacks, indirect-fire attacks, civilian casualties, Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) capability ratings, ANSF operational reporting, ANSF facilities construction and maintenance, ANSF funding, ANSF recruitment, GDP growth rates, population polling, international community donations to Afghanistan, Afghan Government budget execution rates, school attendance, economic infrastructure build, cell phone usage, counternarcotics indicators, health indicators, and many other metrics and indicators. This report—released July 30, 2013—is unclassified,

publicly available on the Department's Web site, and has been made available in printed form to all Members of Congress.

ISAF collects statistics on civilian casualties (CIVCAS), which are also included in the Department's report on "Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan." Between October 1, 2012, and March 31, 2013, CIVCAS from all sources decreased by 11 percent compared to the same period a year ago. The majority of these CIVCAS were caused by insurgents. ISAF-caused CIVCAS decreased by 72 percent, the results of extensive ISAF mitigation actions. There was a 50 percent decrease in ISAF-caused CIVCAS by precision-guided munitions from October 2012 to March 2013. Insurgent-caused CIVCAS also decreased by 10 percent.

As our presence in Afghanistan is reduced, our ability to observe and collect much of these data will also decline.

COUNTERNARCOTICS POLICE OF AFGHANISTAN

Question. I have serious concerns about U.S. planning for the Counternarcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNP-A). While the CNP-A vetted units have made significant progress, they have had limited success in breaking the nexus between narcotics and the insurgency. More troubling, however, are the CNP-A provincial units which seem to lack any coherent strategy for their development. The Defense Department (DOD) has been a major funder of the CNP-A, contributing some \$40 million a year in operating costs, in addition to transportation, logistics, and security support from DOD assets. As DOD and State Department's INL funding dries up, there could be a significant impact on CNP-A operations, causing manpower reductions and rendering many operations unsustainable. The U.S. Government needs a coordinated strategy and approach for the funding and development of the CNP-A, beyond the vetted units; currently, responsibility is diffuse among different agencies with no clear chain of command for making policy decisions. The U.S. Government should assess whether the development of the CNP-A, particularly the provincial units, is realistic, achievable, and sustainable before the 2014 transition.

- Does the U.S. Government have a coordinated strategy for the development of the CNP-A provincial units? If so, please share in detail with the Committee. If not, please justify why we continue to spend money on CNP-A development.

Answer. DOD acknowledges the critical need to continue developing the Counternarcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA). The U.S. Government has an interagency-coordinated strategy, approved by senior leadership in December 2012, to address counternarcotics (CN) issues in Afghanistan, an approach which includes the CNPA. This strategy calls for continuing efforts to build the capacity of the CNPA, and proposes the establishment of a roadmap to create a sustainable and accountable Afghan-led police force by the end of 2014. The strategy also calls for the Ministry of Counter Narcotics to develop incentives for provincial governors to undertake more robust CN initiatives. In addition to these efforts, DOD is developing a post-2014 CN strategy for Afghanistan and plans to deliver this strategy to congressional defense committees by late August 2013.

SIGAR

Question. In recent months, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) has issued a number of troubling reports about our reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. Through its audit and inspection work, SIGAR has identified numerous examples in which the United States created a program or built a facility without consideration as to whether the Afghan Government could sustain it.

- a. Which programs and projects funded by the Defense Department are least likely to be sustained by the Afghan Government?
- b. What steps is your office taking to respond to the many problems SIGAR has identified and increase oversight responsibilities of assistance in Afghanistan?

Answer. Facility maintenance remains a significant challenge for the ANSF. As more than 3,900 projects come to completion, the ANSF will need to fully develop its own organic capability to maintain facilities. Due to the scale of the reconstruction effort and the diversity of metrics used to determine facility sustainability, the Department of Defense (DOD) does not maintain a list of at-risk facilities. However, the United States and its coalition partners remain committed to ensuring the long-term sustainability of these facilities by the Afghans.

DOD has expanded its assessments of certain capital projects in Afghanistan, as required by Section 1273 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013, to help ensure that all the projects we undertake are both needed and sustainable. In addition to DOD initiatives, the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A) has focused on building facility stewardship by 2014, and is showing con-

tinual progress in achieving this goal. The general approach to building facility stewardship capacity is along four lines of effort: (1) hiring facilities engineers; (2) training facility engineers; (3) provision of tools and equipment; and (4) delegating appropriate authorities and developing routine processes so maintenance is consistently executed to high standards. NTM-A also remains committed to constant review of ANSF infrastructure projects, to ensure that they still meet valid requirements. This oversight has resulted in almost 100 projects being cancelled or descope in size, reducing the total cost of the ANSF program from the originally planned \$11.38 billion to \$9.41 billion.

RESPONSE OF ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY PETER LAVOY TO QUESTION
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.

REGIONAL COMMAND SOUTHWEST

Question. On July 10, the Washington Post reported that the U.S. military spent \$34 million building a massive command headquarters for Regional Command Southwest (RC-Southwest), which was just completed. Special Inspector General Sopko's report indicates the facility will never be fully inhabited and will either be demolished or turned over to the Afghan Government in 2014.

- How would you explain to the American people that their taxpayer dollars were spent on such a project, which will never serve its intended purpose and may even be demolished within a year of completion? Will you commit that no further money will be spent on the construction and outfitting of this facility until all of the Special Inspector General's questions in his July 8 letter are answered? Will you commit to making your response to his letter available to the public?

Answer. The Department of Defense (DOD) is committed to pursuing reconstruction projects that are valuable, desired, and sustainable. Construction and infrastructure development has focused on developing the civilian and military infrastructure that will be critical to ensuring the stability of Afghanistan once U.S. and coalition forces depart. These programs continue to bear fruit, and DOD is encouraged by the impact reconstruction efforts are having in Afghanistan. However, due to the difficult and dynamic environment operational environment, there have been cases where projects initiated on one set of assumptions encounter problems when circumstances change.

We have received the SIGAR letter and intend to provide a response to the points that are raised in it. We cannot comment further on the specifics at this time, as the matter is currently under investigation by U.S. Forces-Afghanistan (USFOR-A).

On June 23, 2013, Commander, USFOR-A, opened an investigation under Army Regulation 15-6 to determine the facts and circumstances that led to construction of the Command and Control (C2) facility in Regional Command-Southwest, appointing a major general to lead the investigation. This investigation is ongoing. No findings have been approved, and no final determinations have yet been made as to decisions, communications, or other actions by any particular individual or organization. However, we are committed to sharing the results of the investigation when it is completed.

RESPONSES OF ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY PETER LAVOY TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JEFF FLAKE

WASHINGTON POST

Question. The Washington Post reported on July 9 that, "In northern Afghanistan, the State Department last year abandoned plans to occupy a large building it had intended to use as a consulate. After spending more than \$80 million and signing a 10-year lease, officials determined the facility was too vulnerable to attacks." The report also details a \$34 million new military headquarters in Afghanistan that "commanders in the area, who insisted 3 years ago that they did not need the building, now are in the process of withdrawing forces and see no reason to move into the new facility." This example, in addition to the other egregious examples of wasted taxpayer dollars outlined in the report are unfortunately reminiscent of what we saw with regard to Iraq reconstruction projects, as well.

- a. After commanders in the area said 3 years ago that they had no interest in the facility, why was construction continued on it? Who foisted the building on

those commanders? What was the decisionmaking process on this and who was ultimately responsible for approving construction of the facility?

- b. Three years ago when this facility began construction, discussions about withdrawal from Afghanistan had already begun inside the administration. What considerations were given to any potential withdrawal when plans to construct this facility began?
- c. How is the State Department using the lessons learned from Iraq reconstruction to put a better, less expensive foot forward in post-war Afghanistan?
- d. Are the Departments of Defense and State collaborating on the use of existing infrastructure in Afghanistan to minimize costs going forward?
- e. To what degree is the State Department consulting the Government of Afghanistan over what its infrastructure needs are, and what it can support?

Answer. The Department of Defense (DOD) is committed to pursuing reconstruction projects that are valuable, desired, and sustainable. Construction and infrastructure development has focused on developing the civilian and military infrastructure that will be critical to ensuring the stability of Afghanistan once U.S. and coalition forces depart. These programs continue to bear fruit, and DOD is encouraged by the impact reconstruction efforts are having in Afghanistan. However, due to the difficult and dynamic environment operational environment, there have been cases where projects initiated on one set of assumptions encounter problems when circumstances change.

On June 23, 2013, Commander, U.S. Forces–Afghanistan (USFOR–A) opened an investigation under Army Regulation 15–6 to determine the facts and circumstances that led to construction of the Command and Control (C2) facility in Regional Command–Southwest (RC–SW), appointing a major general to lead the investigation. This investigation is ongoing; no findings have been approved, and no final determinations have yet been made as to decisions, communications, or other actions by any particular individual or organization.

The Departments of Defense and State share a strong interest in ensuring the appropriate use of U.S. taxpayer dollars. Our agencies are institutionalizing the lessons learned from Iraq and Afghanistan (such as enhanced program oversight, higher contractor performance standards, and improved management processes) to ensure the highest levels of interagency communication and collaboration.

For more specific information on the State Department’s Mazar-e-Sharif facility, the Department’s consultations with the Government of Afghanistan on infrastructure needs, or the applicability of lessons learned from Iraq reconstruction on their efforts in post-war Afghanistan, we refer you to the Department of State.

PROJECTS FAILED OR NEAR FAILURE

Question. The Inspectors General for Reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan, respectively, have identified many projects that spent millions of U.S. taxpayer dollars and yet despite these investments, the projects have failed or are near failure. In Iraq, for example, a wastewater treatment plant built in Fallujah “was constructed at great cost but to little effect,” according to the inspector general, serving, “only a fraction of those intended.” That project cost \$99.8 million. In Afghanistan, the inspector general found that an investment of \$18.5 million by USAID in two hospitals “may not be the most economical and practical use of funds,” because “USAID did not fully assess the Ministry of Public Health’s ability to operate and maintain these new facilities once completed.”

- a. To what degree is consideration given to the host country’s ability to maintain facilities such as these when the United States turns them over?
- b. Why didn’t USAID fully assess the ability of the Afghanistan Ministry of Public Health to manage this facility before it was constructed? Is this typical of the way USAID manages assistance projects?
- c. The transition in Afghanistan will be operating during a time of fiscal austerity in the United States. How do you anticipate that the declining budgets of State and USAID will affect these types of projects moving forward?
- d. Will these projects be paid for using overseas contingency operations funds?
- e. Has there been any effort inside State and USAID to learn from past mistakes and avoid making them in the future?

Answer. The Department of Defense (DOD) is committed to pursuing reconstruction projects that are valuable, desired, and sustainable. Construction and infrastructure development has focused on developing the civilian and military infrastructure that will be critical to ensuring the stability of Afghanistan once U.S. and coalition forces depart. These programs continue to bear fruit, and DOD is encouraged by the impact reconstruction efforts are having in Afghanistan. However, due to the difficult and dynamic environment operational environment, there have been

cases where projects initiated on one set of assumptions encounter problems when circumstances change.

Sustainability, specifically the ability of the Afghan Government to maintain completed efforts, has been, and continues to be a factor in DOD's project selection. DOD has expanded its assessments of certain capital projects in Afghanistan, as required by Section 1273 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013, to ensure that these projects are both needed and sustainable. In response to your direct questions regarding USAID, I respectfully defer to my colleagues from the Department of State and USAID, Ambassador Dobbins.

IMMUNITY

Question. Negotiations are underway for a bilateral security agreement between the United States and Afghanistan that would provide immunity for U.S. troops remaining in Afghanistan in a post-2014 environment. According to CRS, "observers report that negotiations have bogged down over Afghan demands for guarantees that the United States will adequately fund the ANSD for at least several years after 2014."

- a. What kinds of guarantees is President Karzai looking for and what does he believe to be "adequate" funding for the ANSF?
- b. What is the administration's position on providing funding for the ANSF and how much of a sticking point will that be in any ultimate agreement?

Answer. Negotiations between the United States and Afghanistan on the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) are ongoing, and as a result we will not discuss the negotiating positions of the Afghan Government. However, the United States remains prepared to negotiate with Afghanistan to conclude a BSA that supports our shared objectives. On the question of guarantees, only the Afghans themselves can guarantee the security of Afghanistan. The United States strongly supports President Karzai's vision, as stated in his 2009 inaugural speech, of an Afghanistan able to provide for its own security in 2014 and beyond. This is the sovereign responsibility of the Afghan Government, and Afghans will provide for their own defense, with support from the international community.

The BSA will enable U.S. forces to continue to remain in Afghanistan after 2014 to carry out a train, advise, and assist mission and a narrow counterterrorism mission.

We strongly support continued U.S. funding of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) as a wise investment in achieving our objectives in Afghanistan. A capable, sustainable ANSF is central to our strategic objective of ensuring Afghanistan never again becomes a safe haven for al-Qaeda or its affiliates.

