

Chairman Kaine and Ranking Member Risch, it is an honor to appear before this subcommittee on this important subject of the future of Afghanistan in the post 2014 period. Before I offer a brief statement, please let me thank the Members for all you continue to do for our magnificent troops in Afghanistan. As this year winds down to the close of this mission, I believe history will record that the United State Congress unfailingly supported our troops and their mission, and for that Mr. Chairman, I will always be grateful.

I'd like to present my thoughts today on the future of Afghanistan in the form of a letter I will be sending to the President elect.

Dear Mr. President ... please accept my sincere congratulations on your election as President of Afghanistan. Your election represents one of the most historic moments in the modern history of your country: the peaceful transition from one elected government to another. Indeed, this act sets a precedent for a region where democracy and peaceful transitions are more often than not aspirational and not realistic.

I have been and remain, Your Excellency, one of the strongest advocates for Afghanistan. I have seen up close the nobility of your people, and I have a comprehensive appreciation for the potential of your country. You will have many competing priorities as you assume office, but please know the American people and the international community wish you every success, and wish for your people every opportunity to move beyond more than three decades of war to a future they and we have sacrificed so much to achieve.

It is in this spirit, President _____, at your inauguration, I offer the following points for your consideration:

First, sign the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA), and in doing so, embrace Afghanistan's desire for a long-term security

relationship with the US, NATO and other key partners. Seek to repair Afghanistan's relationship with the US and the West. Here is your chance Mr. President to begin your presidency in partnership ... and not in conflict ... with the nations who bled and spent their treasure on and for Afghanistan's people.

Additionally, embrace your role as Commander in Chief of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). They have demonstrated extraordinary feats of organization, development, and operational accomplishment. They are brave, principled, and ready to endure great hardship in following your orders and sacrificing for Afghanistan, and your forces need to see and feel firsthand your engaged, positive leadership.

Second, protect the remarkable advances of civil society, and in particular those of women. Much has been accomplished here, but often in spite of existing leadership, systems, and policies. The world is holding its collective breath in anticipation of what will become of the gains of women and minorities under your Administration. Your public commitment to defending, furthering, and advancing women's and minorities' rights will be warmly welcomed by the international community, keen to be helpful, but will also require a comprehensive strategy of Presidential decrees and legislative reform to lock-in these gains and secure the future. As you well know, Mr. President, no state has ever successfully transitioned to a developing society without fully embracing the constructive role of women. Your many friends in the international community are ready to assist you in further empowering the role of women, and more broadly the role of civil society, in building legitimate and enduring institutions of governance.

Third, reach out to Pakistan. For a myriad of complex reasons, the relationship between your country and Pakistan, and their respective peoples, has deteriorated alarmingly over the course of

this conflict. The absence of trust, compounded by uncertainty about the future, has left both nations to hedge their bets ... to the good of no one and the detriment of all involved. Both nations share substantial common trade, economic, social and security interests. In that regard, I suggest you seek to invigorate the Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement and pursue aggressively other cross border and regional economic ties with Pakistan. As well, dealing with the alarming growth of extremists, terrorists, and insurgents on both sides of your common frontier should be a high priority and an important basis for constructive dialogue between your Administration and that of PM Sharif in Islamabad. This dialogue could also serve as the platform for resolving long simmering issues over the Durand Line. Mr. President, the bottom line is that the Afghan and Pakistani people are in the same lifeboat, adrift in a sea of political turmoil, economic challenge, and extremist threat. Your collective approaches to these daunting problems will brighten the possibilities for both countries. Reaching out to Pakistan at the beginning of your Administration is both courageous and timely, and will be strongly supported by the international community, including India.

Fourth, make Afghanistan business friendly. As you build effective governance, and reinforce the rule of law, initiate the necessary legal and regulatory reforms to leverage the natural entrepreneurial spirit of the Afghan people and to create a truly business friendly environment to attract international businesses. The Tokyo Donors Conference in July 2012 signaled a readiness of the international community to invest on the order of \$16B USD during the coming decade. This can be accelerated with the right reform package and your clear and public commitment to doing business within Afghanistan, and externally within the region, and with the international community.

Last, but in the long run most importantly, Mr. President, I urge you to undertake a sweeping, coordinated, and decisive counter-corruption campaign. Here time is not on your side.

Acknowledging that the US and West bear some of the responsibility for the state of corruption in Afghanistan, the great challenge to Afghanistan's future isn't the Taliban, or the Pakistani safe havens, or even an incipiently hostile Pakistan. The existential threat to the long term viability of modern Afghanistan is corruption. Indeed, across your great country, the ideological insurgency, the criminal patronage networks, and the drug enterprise have formed an unholy alliance, which relies for its success on the criminal capture of your government functions at all levels. For too long, we've focused our attention on the Taliban as the existential threat to Afghanistan.

They are an annoyance compared to the scope and magnitude of corruption with which you must contend. While the Afghan National Army will battle your nation's foes, the battle for Afghanistan will be won by righteous law enforcement, a functioning judiciary, and an unambiguous commitment to the rule of law. Indeed, wresting back the institutions of governance from corruption must be one of your highest priorities, Your Excellency, for as you know, corruption is dry rot of democracy. Your fledgling institutions of government and governance and any real hope of economic development will be still born if the drug lords and CPN leadership remain in control.

In closing, Mr. President, I offer these points with the greatest respect. Your commitment to these five areas will be welcomed by the Afghan people who've endured so much, and your leadership in these areas will be hailed internationally. The future of Afghanistan is in your hands.

With abiding respect now and always, I remain,

John R. Allen

General, U.S. Marine Corps (Retired)

**Former Commander, NATO International Security Assistance
Force, and U.S. Forces Afghanistan**