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U.S. Senator for Indiana

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Opening Statement for Hearing on Afghanistan

U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member Dick Lugar made the following statement at today's hearing.

I welcome the witnesses for this timely hearing. It is important to hear voices of those in Afghanistan who have been engaged at close quarters and in combat. In the case of Frank Ruggiero, our Senior Civilian Representative for Regional Command South, and a two-star equivalent, he has been working closely with Afghans and partner nations since mid-2009. General Nicholson has his own recent experience as Deputy Commander Regional Command South and is now leading the Afghanistan-Pakistan Coordination Cell at the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Their insights should bring a practical perspective to the challenges facing our comprehensive strategy as laid out by President Obama in December. We also will test the military slogan, "No plan survives first contact with the enemy."

Regional Command South is the focal point of American military efforts in Afghanistan, with thousands of U.S. troops continuing to deploy there. The Marjah offensive, launched in February of this year, was the first phase of a joint counterinsurgency strategy between Afghanistan and the International Security Assistance Force, or ISAF. General McChrystal has said that soldiers are being positioned to wage a summertime operation intended to push the Taliban from their home turf in Kandahar, where the insurgent movement sustains itself.

As an objective, Kandahar is a dramatic leap in terms of relative size and importance. What are the lessons learned in Marjah regarding military and civilian engagement, and how applicable will they be to the situation in Kandahar and the rest of the country?

Though Afghan civilian governance has been bolstered in Marjah and cash-for-work programs are underway, security remains volatile and the situation is reported as reversible. Progress, however it is measured, will only be possible with a committed and engaged partner. President Karzai's effectiveness has been questioned by several voices within the Administration during the last year. Recently, President Karzai expressed only conditional backing for the Kandahar operation. Subsequently, the Secretary of State and General McChrystal asserted confidence in his commitment to a partnership with the United States.

A key to the President's strategy is shifting responsibility to Afghan institutions, the Transfer element of Clear – Hold – Build – Transfer. That means there must be Afghan security forces and Afghan civil servants who are able to accept the responsibility and operate effectively. Thus far, the Afghan National Army appears to be a relatively positive force. Yet, despite partnering with ISAF forces in recent operations, it is evident that the Afghan army is still ill-prepared to lead. Meanwhile, raising the capabilities of the Afghan National Police is proving a difficult challenge for international police training experts.

The Afghan Civil Service Commission and the Afghan Civil Service Institute also factor into the counterinsurgency equation. Each is relatively new in meeting the requirements of providing thousands of trained technocrats to enable basic service delivery in select areas. While there are commitments to train

more than a thousand persons a month, the reality is that such training will be limited and spreading the personnel effectively across Afghanistan will be a daunting challenge.

I make these points to outline the importance of setting and then meeting appropriate expectations. Building security forces to the level of several hundred thousand does not, in and of itself, guarantee order and discipline. Nor does populating Districts with civil servants mean that basic services will be delivered. Some observers suggest much larger forces may be necessary, but that burden might well prove too great for both Afghans and the international community. Sustainable progress will require some political resolution as well as committed Afghan partners capable of turning local and national institutions into responsive entities for the Afghan people.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

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