

AFGHANISTAN: ASSESSING THE ROAD AHEAD

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AFGHANISTAN: ASSESSING THE ROAD AHEAD

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2009

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:05 a.m., in room SH-216, Hart Senate Office Building, Hon. John F. Kerry (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Senators Kerry, Dodd, Feingold, Boxer, Menendez, Cardin, Casey, Webb, Shaheen, Kaufman, Gillibrand, Lugar, Corker, Isakson, Risch, and Barrasso.

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

The CHAIRMAN. The hearing will come to order.

Secretary Clinton, Secretary Gates, and Admiral Mullen, we welcome you here today. Thank you very much for joining us. And we appreciate your coming to share more details about the President's plan, and for consulting and partnering with Congress on the decision, obviously, of enormous consequences for our soldiers, our security, and our country.

This is a decision that the President of the United States has made, but ultimately all of us share responsibility for its consequences. Given the complexities of our challenge and the seriousness of the sacrifices ahead and the absence of strategy over much of the last 8 years, I believe the President exercised important leadership by taking the time he needed to make the right decision, even as political pressure mounted in different directions. His words and your testimony show that the administration has confronted tough realities, carefully weighed all of the options, and arrived at a comprehensive, considered path forward.

I believe that the President appropriately narrowed the mission in Afghanistan. What he presented to the American people is not an open-ended, nation-building exercise or a nationwide counter-insurgency campaign, and nor should it be. The President was right to frame our commitment to Afghanistan in the context of all of our national priorities, from the drawdown in Iraq to our urgent challenges at home. And he was correct to consider our mission there, in terms of our enduring interests in Pakistan.

Over the last days, I've heard a number of people saying that we are in Afghanistan today because that is the place from which we were attacked. Frankly, 8 years later, that's simply not good enough. We have largely expelled al-Qaeda from Afghanistan. Today, it is the presence of al-Qaeda in Pakistan, its direct ties to,

and support from, the Taliban in Afghanistan, and the perils of an unstable nuclear-armed Pakistan that drive our mission.

What happens in Pakistan, particularly near the Afghan border, will, in my judgment, do more to determine the outcome in Afghanistan than any increase in troops or shift in strategy. Congress has provided 7.5 billion in nonmilitary aid over the next 5 years to help address the crucial Pakistani dimension of the President's plan. That is a beginning. But, I believe, and I think other members of the committee share the belief, that there is more that we can and must do with the Pakistanis, all of which can alleviate the pressure in Afghanistan; indeed, even determine the outcome in Afghanistan.

And I believe it is important for the Pakistanis to understand that our commitment to them and to the region is long term even as troops are reduced in Afghanistan. In fact, the conditions that permit a reduction in American troops in Afghanistan are a benefit to Pakistan.

The President was correct to define success in terms of our ability to empower and transfer responsibility to Afghans as rapidly as possible while simultaneously achieving a sufficient level of stability to ensure that we leave behind an Afghanistan that is not controlled by al-Qaeda or the Taliban.

As I've said before to each extra family that is asked to send a husband, wife, son, or daughter into harm's way, the deployment of a single additional soldier makes all the difference, but a public debate that reduces a difficult mission in a complex region to a simple headline-ready number of troops does us all a disservice. What will matter most on the ground in Afghanistan is not the number of troops, but what they will do and how they are integrated into a broader civilian and military strategy.

I returned from Afghanistan and Pakistan in October with serious concerns that even if additional troops are able to clear the enemy and hold an area, even in the limited areas where we will operate, unless we are able to build and transfer leadership to local Afghans, unless the governance and development pieces are in place, we risk squandering the gains, time and time again. And right now, our military will tell us that, in many places, that tripartite capacity is not there.

There are three principal conditions that I still believe must guide the tasking of additional troops.

First, are there enough reliable Afghan National Army and Police forces to partner with American troops and eventually take over responsibility for security? The President has recognized the critical importance of speeding up training and mentoring. And to date, we've struggled to do so on the scale required, and I look forward to hearing your plans today to increase that training capacity and to quickly move Afghan security forces into the center of the fight.

Second, are there local Afghan leaders with whom we can partner? We have to be able to identify and cooperate with tribal, district, and provincial leaders who command the authority to help deliver services and restore Afghans' faith in their own government.

Third, is the civilian side ready to follow swiftly with development aid that brings tangible benefits to the local population? The

President has outlined a surge in civilian personnel which will be crucial to locking in any of our military gains and bringing stability to Afghanistan. And I know, Secretary Clinton, that you've been working on that task, and we look forward to exploring it with you today.

I would hope that, just as the exit strategy is based on the conditions on the ground, so too should our strategy for any escalation be based on conditions on the ground. I continue to believe that, absent an urgent security need, we should not send American troops in to clear places unless we are confident that we have the Afghan partners and resources in place to build on those victories and transfer both security and government function to legitimate Afghan leaders.

I still remain concerned that additional troops will tempt us beyond a narrow and focused mission. And with 30,000 troops rushing into Afghanistan, I believe we'll be challenged to have the civilian and governance capacity in place quickly enough to translate their sacrifice into lasting gains.

Through conversations with the President and Vice President in recent days, and the President's speech, I've been assured that the administration recognizes the need to meet these conditions. How we answer these challenges will go a long way toward determining our overall prospects for success, and we're all eager to hear in detail how we better—how we can do better than we've done on each of these components.

Everyone understands that President Karzai's efforts and follow-through will be critical to the outcome, and we all understand that our ultimate goal, the cornerstone of our strategy, is to empower and transfer responsibility to the Afghans.

Some are trying to make much of the President's target deadline. I think we learned in Iraq that, when our policy is to be in another country, with troops, for "as long as it takes," our hosts are very good at taking as long as they want. The President is correct to set a target. It will help create a sense of urgency and for the Afghans who chafe at foreign boots on their soil, it sends a message that, while America will remain committed to the Afghan people, we aren't interested in a permanent occupation.

We can all agree that the next 18 months are crucial to reversing the momentum and laying the groundwork for a stable Afghanistan, one where the police and army can play a greater role in serving their citizens, and whose government focuses squarely on reclaiming legitimacy with the Afghan people, and where we have intelligence in place to engage in the counterterrorism missions that, for years ahead, we will need to be able to engage in.

We should all recognize that Americans, all of us, fundamentally share this challenge. The Senate voted unanimously to go to war in Afghanistan. It should humble all of us that today there are simply no easy options. We have no choice but to grapple with the complexities, reach the conclusion that best serves the American people, and work in partnership with other branches of government. And that is how a democracy fights a war.

The President's speech offered a vision of the path forward, but a great many questions remain, including how, simply, beyond adding more resources, the United States and Afghan civilian strategy

will improve, what balance we will strike between securing population centers and venturing into the Afghan countryside, how we intend to finance this increased commitment, and, crucially, how we intend to improve our partnership with Pakistan.

We look forward to the conversation this morning.
Senator Lugar.

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

Senator LUGAR. Mr. Chairman, I join you in welcoming Secretary Clinton, Secretary Gates, and Admiral Mullen.

We appreciate very much that you have come to the Foreign Relations Committee today. The presence of all three of you underscores that success in Afghanistan depends on both military and civilian programs. We must sustain this civil-military approach, given the interlocking elements of the newly announced strategy.

As we consider our course in Afghanistan, we should evaluate options according to how well they contribute to United States national security. The ultimate purpose of committing tens of thousands of new troops and tens of billions of additional dollars to the war effort in Afghanistan must be to enhance United States security and our vital national interests in the region.

This may seem to be an obvious point. But during long wars, specific tactical objectives can become ends, in themselves, disconnected from the broader strategic context or an accounting of finite resources. Pursuing al-Qaeda or the Taliban and improving governance and economic opportunity in Afghanistan are important. But when our country commits the level of forces contemplated by the President to a sustained war, the objective must be absolutely fundamental to United States security.

This is especially true at a time when our Armed Forces have been strained by many years of high deployment rates, our capacity for new government debt is limited, and our Nation has not fully emerged from a severe recession.

The President made the case on Tuesday that what happens in Afghanistan can directly impact the safety of Americans. I believe that most Americans accept this point based on the reality that the 9/11 attacks were conceived in Afghanistan and that the Taliban forces who protected al-Qaeda are likely to become more resurgent if we leave.

But much more discussion is warranted on whether the Afghanistan mission is so central to our core national security that it necessitates huge spending increases and the deployment of a large portion of our finite combat capability.

In essence, we have to ask whether the costs of this deployment are justified in our overall national security context and whether we are mistakenly concentrating our forces to fight a terrorist enemy in a specific location, even as the global terrorist threat is becoming increasingly diffuse.

Terrorist cells that are associated with or sympathetic to al-Qaeda exist in numerous countries in Africa and the Middle East. Terrorist attacks were perpetrated in Europe by homegrown cells. Killing Taliban fighters and training Afghan soldiers and

policemen are unlikely to substantially diminish these broader terrorist threats.

Moreover, the results of even the most skillful civil-military campaign in Afghanistan are likely to be imperfect in the long run. I do not doubt that the application of additional United States and allied forces will result in a military setback for the Taliban. During this time, it is hoped that progress can be made in building Afghan security forces. But over the long run, we should recognize that problems stemming from tribalism, corrupt governance, and lack of economic opportunity in the country are almost certain to persist, complicating efforts to ensure that the central government can effectively govern the country and resist the Taliban when allied troops are withdrawn.

Even if the President's plan achieves the very best stabilization scenario, allowing for United States withdrawals on the schedule he contemplates, we may be responsible for most of the Afghanistan defense and police budgets indefinitely.

Perhaps most importantly, it is not clear how an expanded military effort in Afghanistan addresses the problem of Taliban and al-Qaeda safe havens across the border in Pakistan. If these safe havens persist, any strategy in Afghanistan will be substantially incomplete.

Specifically, will Pakistan work with us to eliminate the leadership of Osama bin Laden and other major al-Qaeda officials?

As hearings in our committee have underscored, the potential global impact of instability in a nuclear-armed Pakistan dwarfs anything that is likely to happen in Afghanistan.

The future direction of governance in Pakistan will have consequences for nonproliferation efforts, global economic stability, our relationships with India and China, and security in both the Middle East and South Asia regions, among other major issues.

The President did not dwell on Pakistan in his speech on Tuesday evening, perhaps because sensitivities in that country to American influences and intentions are extremely delicate. But, the President and his team must justify their plan not only on the basis of how it will affect Afghanistan, but also on how it will impact our efforts to promote a much stronger alliance with Pakistan that embraces vital common objectives.

Having made these observations, I want to recognize that the President has been confronted with extremely difficult choices in Afghanistan and Pakistan. He and his team have worked through the problem carefully and deliberately to reach their conclusions. There are no options available that are guaranteed to succeed. Every conceivable course from complete withdrawal, to maintaining the status quo, to the plan outlined by the President, to an unrestrained and unlimited counterinsurgency campaign, has its own set of risks and costs for the United States. The President deserves credit for accepting ownership of this difficult problem as we go forward and for his clear advocacy expressed in the speech on Tuesday night.

Congress and the American people now must evaluate whether this course has a reasonable chance to succeed, if "success" can be defined, and whether the objectives outlined are worth the expenditure of American and Afghan lives and treasure.

In this situation, the advocacy of the President and his national security team must be as broadminded and thorough as his policy review appeared to be. Within months, the President is likely to ask Congress for additional funds related to Afghanistan. In the meantime, the administration must be prepared to answer many difficult questions about its strategy as the American people study the potential consequences of the President's decision.

I thank our distinguished witnesses for their very substantial leadership. I look forward to hearing their testimony today.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Senator Lugar.

Let me just say that Senator Dodd may have to leave at some point during your testimony, because he has to chair the Bernanke hearings—confirmation hearing today, so we respect the fact that that will be the reason he might have to go.

Senator DODD. I could have brought him here, Mr. Chairman, and have a joint hearing between the Federal Reserve Chairman and the—

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. And maybe he could have told us how we pay for this. [Laughter.]

Madam Secretary, thank you for being here. Mr. Secretary, if you would follow the Secretary of State, and then Admiral Mullen, we look forward to your testimonies. If you want to summarize, we can put your full testimonies in the record.

Thank you.

STATEMENT OF HON. HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON, SECRETARY OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC

Secretary CLINTON. Thank you very much, Chairman Kerry and Ranking Member Lugar, and to all the members of this committee.

It is an honor for me to be here to testify before you, and also to continue the dialogue. Both the chairman and the ranking member's statements, as would be expected, were extraordinarily thoughtful, raised a lot of the hard questions that we're grappling with, and posed the challenges that we have to meet, both the administration and the Congress together. And I want to thank the committee for the constructive role that it has played in helping us to address the difficult issues raised in the region of the world that we are focused on today.

When President Obama addressed the cadets at West Point, he set forth both the rationale and the difficult choices that his policy represents. At the end of a very long and thoughtful process that consisted of 10 meetings with the President and his national security team, and probably three times that many among the rest of us, without the President, the President concluded that, among a range of very difficult decisions, this is the best way to protect our Nation now and in the future.

Extremists who have taken root in the border area of Pakistan and Afghanistan have attacked us before. They've attacked our allies. They are now attempting to destabilize, if not overthrow, the Pakistani Government and take back enough control, if not the entire country, of Afghanistan.

We believe that if we allow Afghanistan to become a failed state, if we allow the extremists to have the same safe havens that they used before 2001, they will have a greater capacity to regroup and attack again, and also to continue to provide the leadership the operational and logistical support that they currently provide to global extremism.

We believe they could drag an entire region into chaos. And we know that, based on the reports from our military and civilian leadership, the situation in Afghanistan is serious, and worsening.

Now, I know we don't want to go back in history and anchor our decision totally on what happened on September 11, 2001, but I think it does have to be part of the national debate.

The damage done with those attacks against our economic and military power centers was also an attack on my constituents, because, at that time, I had the honor of serving as Senator from New York. I witnessed the tragic consequences to the lives of thousands of innocent families, the damage done to the economy, and the damage to our sense of security, so I feel a personal responsibility to help protect our Nation from such violence, and I entered into the very intense consultations we've been engaged in with that as my overriding goal, but without any preconceived notion of exactly the best way to meet that goal.

The case for action against al-Qaeda and its allies has always been clear, but the United States course of action over the last 8 years has not. The fog of another war obscured our focus. And while our attention was focused elsewhere, the Taliban regained momentum in Afghanistan, and the extremist threat grew in Pakistan, a country, as you know well, with 175 million people, a nuclear arsenal, and more than its share of challenges. So, it was against this backdrop that the President called for this careful, thorough review of our strategy.

Our objectives are clear. We will work with the Afghan and Pakistani Governments to eliminate safe havens for those plotting against us, our allies, and our interests. We will work to find reliable partners in the region to help us stabilize it, which we think is fundamental to our national security. We will develop a long-term sustainable relationship with Afghanistan and Pakistan so that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past—primarily, our abandonment of that region. The duration of our military presence will be limited, but our civilian commitment must continue even as our troops begin coming home.

Now, accomplishing this mission and ensuring the safety of the American people is not easy. It does mean sending more civilians, troops, and assistance to Afghanistan, and significantly expanding our civilian efforts in Pakistan, which we have begun to do, under the leadership of the chairman, the ranking member, and this committee. We will be asking the young men and women, who not only serve in the military, but are part of our civilian service team, to be taking great risks and facing extraordinary sacrifices. I want to assure the committee that we will do everything we can to ensure that their sacrifices make our Nation safer.

Now, the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan is serious, but it is not, in my view, as negative as frequently portrayed in public. The beginning of President Karzai's second term has opened a new

window of opportunity. We obviously have real concerns about the influence of corrupt officials in the Afghan Government, and we will redouble our efforts to pursue them. But, in his inauguration speech last month, I witnessed President Karzai call for a new compact with the Afghan people and the international community. He pledged to combat corruption, improve governance, and deliver. His words were long in coming, but they were certainly welcome. They now must be matched with action. The Afghan people, the United States, and the international community must hold the Afghan Government accountable.

We will help by working with our Afghan partners to strengthen institutions at every level. The President has outlined a timeframe for transition to Afghan responsibility. As he said in his speech, "The additional American and international troops will allow us to accelerate our handing over of responsibility to Afghan forces as we begin to transfer our forces out of Afghanistan in July of 2011." Just as we have done in Iraq, we will execute this transition responsibly, taking into account conditions on the ground. This is not a cliff, this is a transition.

The timeframe for the transition provides a sense of urgency in working with the Afghan Government, but it should be clear to everyone that, unlike the past, the United States and our allies will have an enduring commitment to Afghanistan. Our resolve in this fight is reflected in the commitment of troops since the President took office, and in the significant civilian commitment that will continue long after our combat forces begin to leave.

Our civilian effort is already bearing fruit. Civilian experts and advisers are helping to craft policy inside government ministries. We are engaged in a process of certifying those ministries that we feel confident in providing funding for, and we will not provide it if we cannot certify them.

When our Marines went into Nawa this July, we had civilians on the ground with them to coordinate assistance the very next day. As our operations progress, our civ-mil coordination is growing even stronger. We are on the track to triple the number of civilian positions in Afghanistan, to 974 by early next year. When we started, there were about 320; they had 6-month rotations. Our checking of their duty rosters showed that a lot of them didn't spend more than 30 to 60 days inside of Afghanistan, even though they'd been assigned there. We have totally revamped how we are providing civilian assistance, and we believe that we are beginning to make a difference.

Each of these civilians leverage not only, on average, 10 partners from locally employed staff to experts with U.S.-funded NGOs, but what we're finding, most interestingly, is, they leverage expertise within the United States military. When you put an agricultural expert embedded in a battalion, and, along with the commanding officer of that battalion, they go looking for soldiers with ranching and farming experience, we have a real force multiplier. And when I was in Kabul, 2 weeks ago, meeting with our civ-mil teams, that's—those are exactly the kind of stories that I was told. And the military, who are responsible for the clearing and a phase of our military operations, told me repeatedly how important the civilian presence was. As one said to me, "I'm happy to supply what-

ever support these valuable civilians need, and we need more of them.” This strategy will make that possible.

Not only do we believe we have the right people to achieve our objectives, we believe we have a sound strategy. We’ll be delivering high-impact economic assistance and bolstering Afghanistan’s agricultural sector, the traditional core of the Afghan economy.

A number of my former colleagues have talked with me, in the last months, about the importance of agriculture and how they tried for 8 years to help create jobs, reduce the funding that the Taliban receives from poppy cultivation—in effect, draw insurgents off the battlefield by moving them from poppies to pomegranates. Well, we have taken that advice seriously.

We also will support an Afghan-led effort to open the door to those Taliban who are willing to renounce al-Qaeda, abandon violence, and wish to reintegrate into Afghan society. We understand that some of those who fight with the insurgency do not do so out of ideology, theology, or conviction, but, frankly, due to coercion and money. The average Taliban fighter is—our information—receives two to three times the monthly salary than the average Afghan soldier or police officer.

Our regional diplomacy complements this political approach by seeking to mitigate external interference in Afghanistan and working to shift the calculus of neighboring countries.

And that, of course, leads me to Pakistan. A strong, stable, democratic Pakistan must be a key partner for the United States and an ally in the fight against violent extremism. We’ve seen progress over this past year, as people in Pakistan increasingly come to the view that we do share a common enemy. I heard that repeatedly during my recent visit. But, we have a long way to go.

We will significantly expand support intended to help develop the potential of Pakistan and its people, demonstrating a long-term commitment. I spent 3 days in Pakistan last month, and most commonly I heard, over and over again, “You left us before. Will you do it again? You walked away, you left us holding the problem that you helped to create.” We want to send a clear message, as the Kerry-Lugar-Berman legislation does, that we intend to be committed over the long term.

We will not be facing these challenges alone. We have 42 other troop-contributing countries. Our NATO ISAF allies have already made significant contributions. After this hearing, I will leave for Brussels to begin the process of securing additional Afghan commitments. Ambassador Holbrooke is already there consulting with our allies. We’ve had a very encouraging response in the conversations we’ve had thus far. And we’re looking beyond NATO to build the strongest, broadest possible global coalition. Japan just announced a \$5 billion commitment to Afghanistan. We think other governments are beginning to recognize that this is a common fight against a common enemy.

So, let me conclude where I began. We face a range of difficult choices, but the President’s plan represents the best way we know to protect our Nation today and in the future. The task we face is as complex as any national security challenge in our lifetimes. We will not succeed if people view this effort as the responsibility of a single party, a single agency within our government, or a single

country. We owe it to our troops and our civilians, who will face these dangers, to come together as Americans, and come together with our allies and the international partners, to help accomplish this mission.

I look forward, as always, to continuing to work with you to achieve that goal.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Secretary Clinton follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON, SECRETARY OF STATE,
DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC

Chairman Kerry, Senator Lugar, and members of the committee, I'm grateful for this opportunity to testify before so many good friends. Many of you have been personally involved in our efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan. And I want to thank the committee for the constructive role it has played in addressing the challenges we face in this region of the world.

On Tuesday, President Obama presented the administration's strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan. Today, Secretary Gates, Admiral Mullen, and I will all be providing you with additional details. But let me speak briefly at a more personal level about why we are making this commitment.

Simply put, among a range of difficult choices, this is the best way to protect our Nation now and in the future.

The extremists we are fighting in Afghanistan and Pakistan have attacked us and our allies before. If we allow them access to the very same safe havens they used before 2001, they will have a greater capacity to regroup and attack again. They could drag an entire region into chaos. Our civilian and military leaders in Afghanistan have reported that the situation is serious and worsening. We agree.

In the aftermath of September 11, I grieved with sons, daughters, husbands, and wives whose loved ones were murdered. It was an attack on our country, but it was also an attack on my constituents. I witnessed the tragic consequences in the lives of thousands of innocent families, and the damage done to our economy and our sense of security. So I feel a personal responsibility to help protect our Nation from such violence.

THE MISSION

The case for action against al-Qaeda and its allies has always been clear, but the United States course of action over the last 8 years has not. The fog of another war obscured our focus. And while our attention was focused elsewhere, the Taliban gained momentum in Afghanistan. And the extremist threat grew in Pakistan—a country with 175 million people, a nuclear arsenal, and more than its share of challenges.

It was against this backdrop that the President called for a careful, thorough review of our strategy. I was proud to be a part of that process. And our objectives are clear:

- We will work with the Afghan and Pakistani Governments to eliminate safe havens for those plotting attacks against us, our allies, and our interests;
- We will help to stabilize a region that is fundamental to our national security; and
- We will develop a long-term, sustainable relationship with Afghanistan and Pakistan so that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past. The duration of our military presence will be limited, but our civilian commitment must continue even as our troops begin to come home.

Accomplishing this mission and ensuring the safety of the American people will not be easy. It will mean sending more civilians, troops, and assistance to Afghanistan, and significantly expanding our civilian efforts in Pakistan.

The men and women carrying out this mission are not statistics on a PowerPoint slide. They are our friends and neighbors, our sons and daughters, our brothers and sisters. We will be asking them—and the American people who support them—to make extraordinary sacrifices on behalf of our security. I want to assure the committee that we will do everything we can to ensure their sacrifices make our Nation safer.

THE METHODS

The situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan is serious, but it is not, in my view, as negative as frequently portrayed in public. And the beginning of President Karzai's second term has opened a new window of opportunity. We have real concerns about the influence of corrupt officials in the Afghan Government, and we will continue to pursue them. But in his inauguration speech last month, I witnessed President Karzai call for a new compact with the Afghan people and the international community. He pledged to combat corruption, improve governance, and deliver for the people of his country. His words were long in coming, but welcome. They must now be matched with action. The Afghan people, the United States, and the international community will hold the Afghan Government accountable for making good on these commitments.

We will help by working with our Afghan partners to strengthen institutions at every level of Afghan society so that we don't leave chaos behind when our combat troops begin to depart.

The President has outlined a timeframe for transition to Afghan responsibility. As he said in his speech Tuesday, the additional American and international troops will allow us to accelerate handing over responsibility to Afghan forces and allow us to begin the transfer of our forces out of Afghanistan in July 2011. Just as we have done in Iraq, we will execute this transition responsibly, taking into account conditions on the ground.

A timeframe for transition will provide a sense of urgency in working with the Afghan Government. But it should be clear to everyone that—unlike the past—the United States and our allies and partners will have an enduring commitment to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the region. Our resolve in this fight is reflected in the substantial commitment of troops since the President took office and in the significant civilian commitment that will continue long after our combat forces begin to leave.

That civilian effort is already bearing fruit. Civilian experts and advisors are helping to craft policy inside government ministries, providing development assistance in the field, and working in scores of other roles. When our Marines went into Nawa this July, we had civilians on the ground with them to coordinate assistance the next day. And as operations progress, our civ-mil coordination is growing even stronger.

We are on track to triple the number of civilian positions in Afghanistan to 974 by early next year. On average, each of these civilians leverages 10 partners, ranging from locally employed staff to experts with U.S.-funded NGOs. It's cliché to say that we have our best people in these jobs, but it also happens to be true. When I was in Kabul a few weeks ago, I met with an American colonel who told me that while he had thousands of outstanding soldiers under his command, none of them had the 40 years of agricultural experience of the USDA civilian serving alongside his battalion, or the rule of law and governance expertise of their civilian specialists from the State Department. He told me: "I am happy to supply whatever support these valuable civilians need. And we need more of them." The President's strategy will make that possible.

Not only do we have the right people to achieve our objectives, we also have a sound strategy. We will be delivering high-impact economic assistance and bolstering Afghanistan's agricultural sector—the traditional core of the Afghan economy. This will create jobs, reduce the funding that the Taliban receives from poppy cultivation, and draw insurgents off of the battlefield.

We will also support an Afghan-led effort to open the door to those Taliban who abandon violence and want to reintegrate into Afghan society. We understand that some of those who fight with the insurgency do so not out of conviction, but due to coercion or money. All Afghans should have the choice to pursue a better future if they do so peacefully, respect the basic human rights of their fellow citizens, and renounce al-Qaeda.

Our regional diplomacy complements this political approach, by seeking to mitigate external interference in Afghanistan and working to shift the calculus of neighboring countries from competition for influence to cooperation and economic integration.

We also believe that a strong, stable, democratic Pakistan must be a key partner for the United States, and an ally in the fight against violent extremism. People in Pakistan are increasingly coming to the view that we share a common enemy. I heard this repeatedly during my recent visit. Our relationship is anchored in our common goals of civilian rule; robust economic development; and the defeat of those who threaten Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the peace of the world.

We will significantly expand support intended to help develop the potential of Pakistan and its people. Our assistance will demonstrate the United States commitment to addressing problems that affect the everyday lives of Pakistanis and bring our people closer together. But it will also bolster Pakistan against the threat of extremism. A village where girls have had the opportunity to get an education will be more resistant to al-Qaeda and the Taliban. And a young man with a bright future in a growing economy is less likely to waste his potential in a suicide bombing. It was extremely important to have the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act—sponsored by Chairman Kerry, Senator Lugar, and Chairman Berman—pass with bipartisan and bicameral support. We will seek full funding from Congress, and I believe this legislation will play a critical role in helping us transform our partnership with Pakistan.

We will not be facing these challenges alone. We share this responsibility with governments around the world. Our NATO allies have already made significant contributions of their own in Afghanistan, and this afternoon I will leave for Brussels to begin the process of securing additional alliance commitments of troops, trainers, and resources. Ambassador Holbrooke, our Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, is already there consulting with our allies.

The international community is also expanding its support to Pakistan, and we are in close touch with partners to coordinate assistance. We are also looking beyond NATO to build the broadest possible global coalition to meet this challenge. Our objectives are shared by people and governments from Europe to Australia, from Russia to China to India, and across the Middle East. And we are reaching out to Muslims everywhere to make it clear that the United States seeks to build a better future with them in a spirit of mutual respect and partnership.

THE MESSAGE

Let me conclude where I began. We face a range of difficult choices in Afghanistan and Pakistan. But the President's plan represents the best way we know to protect our Nation today and in the future. The task we face is as complex as any national security challenge in our lifetimes. We will not succeed if people view this effort as the responsibility of a single party, a single agency within our government, or a single country. We owe it to the troops and civilians who will face these dangers to come together as Americans—and come together with our allies and international partners—to help them accomplish this mission. I look forward to working with you to meet this challenge. And I thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Madam Secretary.
Secretary Gates.

STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT GATES, SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, WASHINGTON, DC

Secretary GATES. Mr. Chairman, Senator Lugar, members of the committee, I would like to provide an overview of the strategic thinking and context behind the President's decisions; in particular, the nexus among al-Qaeda, the Taliban, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, and our objectives, and how the President's strategy aims to accomplish them.

As the President first stated in March, and reemphasized Tuesday night, the goal of the United States in Afghanistan and Pakistan is to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda and its extremist allies, and to prevent its return to both countries. The international military effort to stabilize Afghanistan is necessary to achieve this overarching goal.

Defeating al-Qaeda and enhancing Afghan security are mutually reinforcing missions. They cannot be untethered from one another, as much as we might wish that to be the case.

While al-Qaeda is under great pressure now, and dependent on the Taliban and other extremist groups for sustainment, the success of the Taliban would vastly strengthen al-Qaeda's message to the Muslim world that violent extremists are on the winning side of history. Put simply, the Taliban and al-Qaeda have become sym-

biotic, each benefiting from the success and mythology of the other. Al-Qaeda leaders have stated this explicitly and repeatedly.

The lesson of the Afghan Taliban's revival for al-Qaeda is that time and will are on their side, that with a Western defeat, they could regain their strength and achieve a major strategic victory, as long as their senior leadership lives and can continue to inspire and attract followers and funding. Rolling back the Taliban is now necessary, even if not sufficient, to the ultimate defeat of al-Qaeda.

At the same time, one cannot separate the security situation in Afghanistan from the stability of Pakistan, a nuclear-armed nation of 175 million people now also explicitly targeted by Islamic extremists. Giving extremists breathing room in Pakistan led to the resurgence of the Taliban and more coordinated, sophisticated attacks in Afghanistan.

By the same token, providing a sanctuary for extremists in southern and eastern Afghanistan would put yet more pressure on a Pakistani Government already under attack from groups operating in the border region. Indeed, the Pakistan Taliban, in just the last year or so, has become a real threat to Pakistan's domestic peace and stability, carrying out, with al-Qaeda's help, escalating bombing attacks throughout the country.

Failure in Afghanistan would mean a Taliban takeover of much, if not most, of Afghanistan, and likely a renewed civil war. Taliban-ruled areas could, in short order, become, once again, a sanctuary for al-Qaeda, as well as a staging area for resurgent militant groups on the offensive in Pakistan.

Success in South and Central Asia by Islamic extremists, as was the case 20 years ago, would beget success on other fronts. It would strengthen the al-Qaeda narrative, providing renewed opportunities for recruitment, fundraising, and more sophisticated operations.

It is true that al-Qaeda and its followers can plot and execute attacks from a variety of locations, from Munich to London to Denver. What makes the border area between Afghanistan and Pakistan uniquely different from any other location, including Somalia, Yemen, and elsewhere, is that this part of the world represents the epicenter of extremist jihadism, the historic place where native and foreign Muslims defeated one superpower and, in their view, caused its collapse at home. For them to be seen to defeat the sole remaining superpower in the same place would have severe consequences for this country and the world.

Some say this is similar to the domino theory that underpinned, and ultimately muddied, the thinking behind the United States military escalation in Vietnam. The difference, however, is that we have very real and very recent history that shows just what can happen in this part of the world when extremists have breathing space, safe havens, and governments complicit with, and supportive of, their mission.

Less than 5 years after the last Soviet tank crossed the Termez Bridge out of Afghanistan, in 1993, Islamic militants launched their first attack on the World Trade Center in New York. We cannot afford to make a similar mistake again.

The President's new strategic concept aims to reverse the Taliban's momentum and reduce its strength, while providing the

time and space necessary for the Afghans to develop enough security and governance capacity to stabilize their own country. The essence of our civil-military plan is to “clear, hold, build, and transfer.” Beginning to transfer security responsibility to the Afghans in summer of 2011 is critical and, in my view, achievable.

July 2011, the time at which the President said the United States will begin to drawdown our forces, will be the beginning of a process, an inflection point, if you will, of transition where Afghan forces begin to assume greater responsibility for security. The pace and character of that drawdown, which districts and provinces are turned over, and when, will be determined by conditions on the ground. It will be a gradual but inexorable process. It will be similar to the gradual but steady conditions-based drawdown that began to take place in Iraq about 14 months after the surge began there.

As with so many issues in the national security and defense arena, the real challenge in Afghanistan is finding the right balance. The prompt dispatch of some 30,000 United States combat troops, on top of the 21,000 already ordered by the President earlier this year, sends a certain message of the President’s resolve to both our partners and our adversaries in Afghanistan and Pakistan. When this buildup is complete, total United States force levels in Afghanistan will have more than doubled under President Obama’s orders, to about 100,000 troops. Whether you agree with what we are doing or not, there should be no doubting, at home or abroad, this President’s commitment to the success of this mission.

On the other hand, we have to send an equally strong message to the Afghan Government that, when all is said and done, the United States military is not going to be there to protect them forever, that the Afghans must step up to the plate and do the things necessary that will allow them to take primary responsibility for defending their own country, and do so with a sense of purpose and urgency.

This is the balance we’re trying to achieve, and I believe the President’s plan provides both the resources and the flexibility to do so. Making this transition possible requires accelerating the development of a significantly larger and more capable Afghan army and police through intensive partnering with ISAF forces, especially in combat. Even after we transfer security responsibility to the Afghans and drawdown our combat forces, the United States will continue to support their development as an important partner for the long haul. We must not repeat the mistakes of 1989, when we abandoned the country, only to see it descend into chaos and then into Taliban hands.

Let me offer a couple of closing thoughts. The President believes, as I do, that, in the end, we cannot defeat al-Qaeda and its toxic ideology without improving and stabilizing the security situation in Afghanistan. The President’s decision offers the best possibility to decisively change the momentum in Afghanistan and fundamentally alter the strategic equation in Pakistan and Central Asia, all necessary to protect the United States, our allies, and our vital interests.

As always, the heaviest burden will fall on the men and women who have volunteered and revolunteered to serve their country in

uniform. I know they will be uppermost in our minds and in our prayers as we take on this arduous, but vitally important, mission. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Secretary Gates follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT GATES, SECRETARY OF DEFENSE,
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for inviting us to testify today. On Tuesday night, President Obama announced a renewed commitment and more focused strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan. I would like to provide an overview of the strategic thinking and context behind his decisions, in particular:

- The nexus among al-Qaeda, the Taliban, Pakistan, and Afghanistan;
- Our objectives and how the President's strategy aims to accomplish them; and
- The military forces required.

WHERE WE STAND

As the President first stated in March, and reemphasized on Tuesday, the goal of the United States in Afghanistan and Pakistan is to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda and to prevent its return to both countries. The international military effort to stabilize Afghanistan is necessary to achieve this overarching goal. Defeating al-Qaeda and enhancing Afghan security are mutually reinforcing missions. They cannot be untethered from one another, as much as we might wish that to be the case.

While al-Qaeda is under great pressure now and dependent on the Taliban and other extremist groups for sustainment, the success of the Taliban would vastly strengthen al-Qaeda's message to the Muslim world: that violent extremists are on the winning side of history. Put simply, the Taliban and al-Qaeda have become symbiotic, each benefiting from the success and mythology of the other. Al-Qaeda leaders have stated this explicitly and repeatedly.

Taliban success in retaking and holding parts of Afghanistan against the combined forces of multiple, modern armies—the current direction of events—has dramatically strengthened the extremist mythology and popular perceptions of who is winning and who is losing. The lesson of the Taliban's revival for al-Qaeda is that time and will are on their side. That, with a Western defeat, they could regain their strength and achieve a major strategic victory—as long as their senior leadership lives and can continue to inspire and attract followers and funding. Rolling back the Taliban is now necessary, even if not sufficient, to the ultimate defeat of al-Qaeda.

At the same time, one cannot separate the security situation in Afghanistan from the stability of Pakistan—a nuclear-armed nation of 175 million people now also explicitly targeted by Islamic extremists. The two countries, bound by ties of tribe and faith, share a porous border of more than 1,500 miles. Giving extremists breathing room in Pakistan led to the resurgence of the Taliban and more coordinated, sophisticated attacks in Afghanistan. Providing a sanctuary for extremists in southern and eastern Afghanistan would put yet more pressure on a Pakistani Government already under attack from groups operating in the border region. Indeed, the Pakistan Taliban, just in the last year or so, has become a real threat to Pakistan's own domestic peace and stability, carrying out—with al-Qaeda's help—escalating bombing attacks throughout the country. It is these attacks, and the Taliban's movement toward Islamabad 7 months ago, that largely motivated the current operations by the Pakistani army. And we know the Pakistan Taliban operate in collusion with both the Taliban in Afghanistan and al-Qaeda.

A related point with regard to Pakistan: Because of American withdrawal from the region in the early 1990s, followed by a severing of military-to-military relations, many Pakistanis are skeptical that the United States is a reliable, long-term strategic partner.

CONSEQUENCES OF FAILURE

Failure in Afghanistan would mean a Taliban takeover of much, if not most, of the country and likely a renewed civil war. Taliban-ruled areas could in short order become, once again, a sanctuary for al-Qaeda as well as a staging area for resurgent militant groups on the offensive in Pakistan.

Success in South and Central Asia by Islamic extremists—as was the case 20 years ago—would beget success on other fronts. It would strengthen the al-Qaeda narrative, providing renewed opportunities for recruitment, fund-raising, and more

sophisticated operations. Aided by the Internet, many more followers could join their ranks, both in the region and in susceptible populations across the globe.

It is true that al-Qaeda and its followers can plot and execute attacks from a variety of locations—from Munich to London to Denver. But what makes the border area between Afghanistan and Pakistan uniquely different from any other location—including Somalia, Yemen, and other possible redoubts—is that this part of the world represents the epicenter of extremist jihadism: the historic place where native and foreign Muslims defeated one superpower and, in their view, caused its collapse at home. For them to be seen to defeat the sole remaining superpower in the same place would have severe consequences for the United States and the world.

Some may say this is similar to the “domino theory” that underpinned and ultimately muddled the thinking behind the U.S. military escalation in Vietnam. The difference, however, is that we have very real—and very recent—history that shows just what can happen in this part of the world when extremists have breathing space, safe havens, and governments complicit with and supportive of their mission. Less than 5 years after the last Soviet tank crossed the Termez Bridge out of Afghanistan, Islamic militants launched their first attack on the World Trade Center in New York. We cannot afford to make a similar mistake again.

THE WAY AHEAD

A stable security situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan—one that is sustainable over the long term by their governments—is vital to our national security. By the same token, the current status quo in Afghanistan—the slow but steady deterioration of the security situation and growing influence of the Taliban—is unacceptable. So too is the status quo ante—a largely ungoverned region controlled by extremists in which the United States had little influence or ability to gain actionable intelligence on the ground.

The President’s new strategic concept aims to reverse the Taliban’s momentum and reduce its strength while providing the time and space necessary for the Afghans to develop enough security and governance capacity to stabilize their own country.

We will focus our resources where the population is most threatened, and align military and civilian efforts accordingly—with six primary objectives:

- Reversing Taliban momentum through sustained military action by the United States, our allies, and the Afghans;
- Denying the Taliban access to and control of key population and production centers and lines of communications;
- Disrupting the Taliban outside secured areas and preventing al-Qaeda from regaining sanctuary in Afghanistan;
- Degrading the Taliban to levels manageable by the Afghan National Security Forces;
- Increasing the size and capability of the ANSF and employing other local forces selectively to begin transitioning security responsibility to the Afghan Government within 18 months; and
- Selectively building the capacity of the Afghan Government, particularly in key ministries.

This approach is not open-ended “nation building.” It is neither necessary nor feasible to create a modern, centralized, Western-style Afghan nation-state—the likes of which has never been seen in that country. Nor does it entail pacifying every village and conducting textbook counterinsurgency from one end of Afghanistan to the other.

It is, instead, a narrower focus tied more tightly to our core goal of disrupting, dismantling, and eventually defeating al-Qaeda by building the capacity of the Afghans—capacity that will be measured by observable progress on clear objectives, and not simply by the passage of time.

The essence of our civil-military plan is to clear, hold, build, and transfer. Beginning to transfer security responsibility to the Afghans in summer 2011 is critical—and, in my view, achievable. This transfer will occur district by district, province by province, depending on conditions on the ground. The process will be similar to what we did in Iraq, where international security forces provided “overwatch”—first at the tactical level, then at the strategic level. Even after we transfer security responsibility to the Afghans and drawdown our combat forces, the United States will continue to support their development as an important partner for the long haul. We will not repeat the mistakes of 1989, when we abandoned the country only to see it descend into civil war, and then into Taliban hands.

Making this transition possible requires accelerating the development of a significantly larger and more capable Afghan army and police through intensive part-

nering with ISAF forces, especially in combat. It also means achieving a better balance between national and local forces; increasing Afghan unconventional warfare capabilities; engaging communities to enlist more local security forces to protect their own territory; and bolstering Afghan-led reintegration and reconciliation efforts.

At the strategic level, the President's plan will achieve a better balance between investments in the central government and subnational entities. At the national level, the focus will be primarily on reforming essential ministries and pressing for the appointment of competent and honest ministers and governors. At the local and regional level, there will be a shift to work through existing, traditional structures rather than building new ones. In all of these efforts, we must have a committed partner in the Afghan people and government. That is one reason why there will be very clear and definitive timeframes for reviewing our—and their—progress.

ADDITIONAL U.S. FORCES

As the President announced, the United States will commit an additional 30,000 troops to Afghanistan for an extended surge of 18 to 24 months. These forces—the U.S. contribution to this fight—will be deployed and concentrated in the southern and eastern parts of the country. The first of these forces will begin to arrive in Afghanistan within 2–3 weeks.

In all, since taking office President Obama has committed nearly 52,000 additional troops to Afghanistan for a total U.S. force of approximately 100,000. We are looking to NATO and our other partners to send a parallel international message of strong resolve. Our allies must take the lead and focus their resources in the north and west to prevent the insurgency from establishing new footholds. We will seek some 5–7,000 troops from NATO and expect the allies to share more of the burden in training, equipping, and funding the Afghan National Army and police.

CONCLUSION

Let me offer a few closing thoughts.

It is worth remembering that the security situation in Afghanistan—though serious—does not begin to approach the scale of violence that consumed Iraq and confronted our forces there when I was confirmed as Secretary of Defense 3 years ago this week. With all the resources already committed to this campaign—plus those the President has just announced—I believe the pieces are being put in place to make real and measurable progress in Afghanistan over the next 18 to 24 months.

The President believes, as do I, that, in the end, we cannot defeat al-Qaeda and its toxic ideology without improving and stabilizing the security situation in Afghanistan. The President's decision offers the best possibility to decisively change the momentum in Afghanistan, and fundamentally alter the strategic equation in Pakistan and Central Asia—all necessary to protect the United States, our allies, and our vital interests. So, I ask for your full support of this decision to provide both Ambassador Eikenberry and General McChrystal the resources they need to be successful.

This will take more patience, perseverance, and sacrifice by the United States and our allies. As always, the heaviest burden will fall on the men and women who have volunteered and in many cases revolunteered—to serve their country in uniform. I know they will be uppermost in our minds and prayers as we take on this arduous but vitally necessary mission.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Secretary Gates.
Admiral Mullen.

STATEMENT OF ADM MICHAEL MULLEN, CHAIRMAN, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF, WASHINGTON, DC

Admiral MULLEN. Chairman Kerry, Senator Lugar, and distinguished members of this committee, thank you for your time today.

I'd also like to express my appreciation for all the work this committee has done to get the Kerry-Lugar-Berman bill passed. And there, in these discussions, it can be easily lost that that \$7½ billion is actually nonmilitary aid, which I think, having spent a lot of time in that part of the world, is absolutely critical. And the other part of it is that it's over an extended period of time. For too

long in Pakistan, as many of you know, it's been year-to-year, and so that 5-year commitment is really significant.

And I want to ensure you, in the debates and the deliberations that we've had in the administration with respect to this strategy in this region, that there was an enormous amount of time spent on Pakistan, and, Chairman, specifically to your focus on this, that that was a very critical part of the discussion, as well. And, by and large, the principles agreed on the need to have a sustained, long-term partnership approach with Pakistan, even given the complexities there.

And then, the linkage—I have come to believe that the linkage between Afghanistan and Pakistan is almost absolute and that the outcome in Afghanistan bears directly on Pakistan's future and how they'll act and how they see their future. So, a stable, supportive Afghanistan will make a big difference in how Pakistan sees its future.

I support, fully and without hesitation, the President's decision, and appreciate the opportunity to contribute to what I believe was a healthy and productive discussion. I've seen lots of internal debates on national security issues in the time that I've been chairman, but I can honestly say that there's not one issue that was so thoroughly and thoughtfully considered as this one, as, in fact, it should be, as Secretary Clinton said, because this is the most complex national security issue that faces us. It's also, in my belief, directly tied to our vital national interests.

Every military leader in the chain of command, as well as those of the Joint Chiefs, was given a voice, and every single individual used it. We now have before us a strategy that more appropriately matches us to the situation on the ground in Afghanistan, and resources matched more appropriately to that strategy, particularly with regard to reversing the insurgency's momentum as quickly as possible, focusing immediately on 2010. And given the stakes in Afghanistan for our own national security, as well as that of our partners around the world, I believe that the time we took was well worth it.

Secretaries Clinton and Gates have already walked you through the policy issues, the large policy issues in question, and I won't repeat them here.

But, from a purely military perspective, I believe our new approach does three critical things.

First, by providing more discrete objectives, it offers better guidance to commanders on the ground about how to employ their forces. They will still work to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda and prevent Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven. They will still strive to protect the Afghan people, who remain the center of gravity in Afghanistan. They will still pursue major elements of the counterinsurgency campaign desired and designed by General McChrystal, which, as we all know, involves at least some measure of active counterterrorism operations. But, now, they will tailor this campaign and those operations by focusing on key population areas, by increasing pressure on al-Qaeda's leadership, and by more effectively working to degrade the Taliban's influence, and by streamlining and accelerating the growth of competent Afghan National Security Forces.

At its core, our strategy is about providing breathing space for the Afghans to secure their own people and to stabilize their own country. It's about partnering and mentoring just as much, if not more so, than it is about fighting and combat. Where once we believed that finishing the job meant, to a large degree, "do it ourselves," we now know it cannot truly or permanently be done by anyone other than the Afghans themselves. Fully a third of the United States troops in theater are partnered with Afghan forces as we speak, and I expect that number to rapidly grow over the next year.

Second, but not insignificantly, this new strategy gives commanders on the ground the resources and the support they need to reverse the momentum of the Taliban insurgency and to accomplish these more limited objectives. I've said it before, and I believe it still today, that this region is the epicenter of global Islamic extremism. And I acknowledge that there are federated terrorists globally. But, this is the epicenter. It's the place from which we were attacked on 9/11, as has been discussed, and, should we be hit again, it's the place from which, I am convinced, the planning, training, financing, and leadership will emanate.

Al-Qaeda may, in fact, be the architect of such an attack, but the Taliban will be the bricklayers. Though hardly a uniform body, Taliban groups have grown bolder and more sophisticated. I saw that just a few months ago in the Korengal Valley, where Taliban forces attacked coalition outposts using what I would call "almost conventional small-unit tactics." Their fighters were better organized and better equipped than they were just 1 year ago. That's been the case for the last 3 years. In fact, coalition forces experienced a record number of—a record level of violence over the last year, up 60 percent in 2009, when compared to 2008. And through brutal intimidation, the Taliban has established shadow governments across the country, coercing the reluctant support of many locals, and challenging the authority of elected leaders and state institutions. Indeed, we believe the insurgency has achieved a dominant influence in 11 of the—of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. To say there is no serious threat of Afghanistan falling once again into Taliban hands ignores the audacity of even the insurgency's most public statements. And to argue that, should they have that power, the Taliban would not at least tolerate the presence of al-Qaeda on Afghan soil, is to ignore both the recent past and the evidence we see every day of collusion between these factions on both sides of the Af-Pak border. The cost of failure, then, is grave. That is why the President's decision for the extended surge of—to Afghanistan of 30,000 additional troops is so important. It gets the most U.S. force into the fight as quickly as possible, giving General McChrystal everything he needs in 2010 to gain the initiative. It validates our adherence to a counterinsurgency approach, and it offers our troops in Afghanistan the best possible chance to set the security conditions for the Afghan people to see our commitment to their future, for the Karzai government to know our strong desire to see his promised reforms, and for the Afghan Taliban to understand they will not and cannot take back Afghanistan, and finally, for those beyond Afghanistan who support the Taliban or who

would see the return of al-Qaeda, to realize the futility of their pursuit.

I should add that these reinforcements come on top of the 21,000 troops the President ordered shortly after taking office, troops which have already made a huge difference in the southern Helmand Valley. But, as I have testified before, Mr. Chairman, no amount of troops in no amount of time will ever be enough to completely achieve success in such a fight; they simply must be accompanied by good governance and healthy public administration. This, not troop numbers, is the area of my greatest concern. Like everyone else, I look forward to working with the Karzai government, but we must have the support of the interagency and international communities, as well.

And that brings me to my final point. The President's new strategy still recognizes the criticality of a broad-based approach to regional problems. He does not view Afghanistan in isolation any more than he views the ties between al-Qaeda and the Taliban as superficial. He's called for a stronger and more productive cooperation with neighboring Pakistan, which is, likewise, under the threat from radical elements and whose support remains vital to our ability to eliminate those safe havens. He has pledged, and we in the military welcome, renewed emphasis on securing more civilian expertise to the effort, more contributions by other NATO nations, and a realistic plan to transition responsibilities to the Afghans.

His is a more balanced, more flexible, and more achievable strategy than we've had in the past, one based on pragmatism and real possibilities. And speaking for the 2.2 million men and women who must go execute this and who, with their families, have borne the brunt of the stress and the strain of 8 years of constant combat, I support the President's decision and appreciate his leadership.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Admiral Mullen follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ADM MICHAEL G. MULLEN, USN, CHAIRMAN OF THE
JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF, WASHINGTON, DC

Chairman Kerry, Senator Lugar, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the subject of the President's newly announced strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The President's Tuesday evening announcement at West Point of our strategy and increased military resources for Afghanistan culminates a process of deliberate strategic review that began with the arrival of General McChrystal's interim assessment in early September. I believe this national-level review has been sober and essential. The challenges we face in Afghanistan and Pakistan are great, and our interests there are significant. This administration needed to take the time to look at all the options and craft a balanced and sustainable approach. I believe that the review has met this aim.

I support fully, and without hesitation, the President's decision.

REFINING THE STRATEGY

The facts compel us to act. Our strategic review confirmed that the overarching policy goal remains the same: to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and to prevent its capacity to threaten America and our allies from either country in the future.

South Asia is the epicenter of global Islamic extremism; the location of al-Qaeda's core leadership and the terrain that dozens of Islamic terrorist groups call home. It is the location from which the 9/11 attacks on America were planned and driven. If the United States should be hit again, I remain convinced that the planning,

training, and funding for such an attack will emanate there. It is a region where a nuclear weapons state, Pakistan, is under direct threat from al-Qaeda and affiliated Pakistani-Taliban groups that aspire to acquire and use nuclear weapons against the United States and our allies. Thus, it is a region with a unique—and deadly—combination of the most dangerous terrorists and the most dangerous technology in the world. Our actions in Pakistan and Afghanistan seek to prevent catastrophic outcomes from these toxic forces, and constitute a most critical national interest.

Our strategic review paid particular attention to Pakistan. The people of Pakistan are under as much, if not greater, threat from al-Qaeda and Islamic terrorism than are we. We must encourage and aid the Pakistani military fight against these extremists in South Waziristan, in SWAT, and across Pakistan. We must also help Pakistan widen its aperture in seeking out and eliminating all forms of extremism and terrorism—those who threaten not only Pakistan, but also Afghanistan, the wider South Asia region, and the globe. We are deepening ties with the people of Pakistan as well as with their security forces. We see progress with our Pakistani allies as paramount to the way ahead.

In Afghanistan, we narrowed in on a challenging, but attainable goal: to deny al-Qaeda safe haven and the Afghan-Taliban the ability to overthrow the duly elected Afghan Government. To achieve this refined strategic aim, we must continue to deny al-Qaeda any Afghanistan toe-hold, reverse the momentum of the Taliban insurgency, and build sufficient Afghan Government and security capacity to eventually defeat the insurgent threat. Our review also narrowed and refined the military objectives for General McChrystal's NATO-ISAF force—focusing it on security of key population areas while Afghan forces grow in size and capability, prioritizing a robust NATO-ISAF program of training and mentoring Afghan military and police, and establishing the conditions necessary for Afghans to assume their own security. Each of these objectives will hasten the day when we can begin thinning the U.S./NATO-ISAF security forces presence, turning the internal security of Afghanistan over to the Afghans. This strategy provides the time and space for the Afghans themselves to build sufficient security and governance capacity to stabilize their country.

Our refined military objectives for Afghanistan complement those in the political and economic spheres. They also support diplomatic, political, and military programs that the President's strategy calls for us to undertake with neighboring countries—especially Pakistan—that increase pressure against al-Qaeda's leadership; that expand counterinsurgency operations against Taliban insurgents who threaten Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the wider region; and that help set the conditions for improved regional security and stability.

MATCHING STRATEGY AND RESOURCES

Throughout this strategic review, I advised the Secretary of Defense and the President that our commitment of military resources must match our strategy.

I am pleased to inform this committee that the President's decision accommodates this advice. The strategy he approved commits 30,000 more U.S. forces, with some number of additional enablers, while calling for our NATO and non-NATO allies to generate additional forces. This rapid, coalition-wide buildup of force aligns with General McChrystal's recommendations, even more so in light of the narrowing of objectives for Afghanistan that the President announced Tuesday night.

The President's commitment is to rapidly send these additional forces forward to get as much force into the fight as fast as General McChrystal can absorb it. This allows Generals McChrystal and Petraeus to plan for cohesive logistics and transportation support over the course of the coming year. While there are no guarantees in war, I expect that we will make significant headway in the next 18–24 months. I also believe we could begin to thin our combat forces in about the same timeframe. From a military standpoint, the President's commitment to an increase in military force, especially backed by an increase in civilian resources, is much better than one featuring periodic assessments that trigger incremental force escalation.

The President's decision also supports accelerated expansion of Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF)—a critical initiative. We simply must invest in the growth of an Afghan security force—through more radical and in-depth partnering. The additional U.S. and coalition forces heading to Afghanistan will focus a great amount of time and energy toward empowering a strong and capable ANSF.

General McChrystal intends to use these additional U.S. troops to conduct more focused counterinsurgency operations that enhance population security against the Taliban in south and east Afghanistan. As in Iraq, our troops will live among the population. Thus—and as General McChrystal has successfully emphasized since his

arrival as COMISAF last June—we will continue to make every effort to eliminate civilian casualties, not just because this is the right thing to do, but because these casualties work against our goal of Afghan population security. Although we must expect higher alliance casualties in coming months as we dedicate more U.S. forces to protect the population and mentor the ANSF, our extended security presence must—and will—improve security for the Afghan people and limit both future civilian and military casualties

MOVING FORWARD—CONCLUSION

No commitment of additional force in the number we plan for Afghanistan is without risk. The Joint Chiefs of Staff and I assess the risks to our military forces and our military missions—at home and abroad—from this force deployment decision to be acceptable. We can continue to balance the additional force flow requirements for Afghanistan against those coming available from drawdown trajectory programmed for, and on track in, Iraq.

I believe that progress in Afghanistan and Pakistan will be gradual, and sometimes halting. Yet I believe we can succeed. The President's announced strategy and this force-flow decision give us the best possible chance for success. We must exhibit vision, apply sufficient resources, and display endurance to realize our objectives for Afghanistan and Pakistan. Most challenges we now confront in the South Asia region are not military in nature. They require solutions from and led by national and local governments. Yet none of these solutions are possible in an environment of insecurity. Our role must be to fill the security gap for a short time, concurrently growing our partner government's capacity to self-secure. Pursued with resolve, our actions will send an unmistakable message that the United States remains committed to the common good, while steadily expanding the sets of partnerships available to address future challenges without a long-term need for large numbers of U.S. combat forces.

In providing advice to this President over the past 10 months, one important point I have made, consonant with other key Presidential advisers, is that our military activities must support rather than lead our Nation's foreign policy. Our warfighting ability will never be in doubt. But we have learned from the past 8 years of war that we serve this Nation best when we are part of a comprehensive, integrated approach that employs all elements of national power to achieve the policy goals set by our civilian leaders. This approach remains crucial in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and across South Central Asia.

On behalf of our servicemembers, I would like to thank the members of this committee—and the Congress as a whole—for the sustained investment in our brave young men and women in uniform, and for your unwavering support of them and their families as they continue to serve so magnificently and selflessly in this time of protracted war.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Admiral.

Thank you, each of you, for comprehensive statements that are very, very helpful.

Let me focus in, if I can, on—Secretary Gates, you particularly talked about the nexus with respect to the al-Qaeda/Taliban relationship and why Afghanistan is important in that. Last night, I had dinner with a group of Congressmen, a number of whom either don't see the nexus or don't accept it or, you know, somehow feel that we can get by notwithstanding whatever nexus there is, that it doesn't rise to the level—in a sense, building on Senator Lugar's opening statement, where he, sort of, talked about the question of, you know, being fixated on al-Qaeda and committing a certain number of troops that may be out of proportion to the level of threat.

You've both—both Secretary Clinton and you, Secretary Gates, addressed this in your statements, but there's a way in which, I think, somehow, in the statements, people don't always hear the exclamation point of it.

I'd like to ask you—I mean, if we have Congress—if we have members of this committee who disagree with the decision and who feel that somehow that nexus is not sufficient, that it brings this

national security threat to a level that says, "You've got to have 100,000 troops," et cetera—you know the arguments—what I want you to do now, if you can, is put the exclamation point on it. I mean, how do you convey, through your experience and the stakes that you're trying to protect, what is really at stake here so people understand why the President, who clearly, at West Point, said, you know, he doesn't take this decision lightly—and we all understand that; nobody would—to make this kind of commitment. What is it, in the simplest of terms, that compels you to say, "Al-Qaeda in Pakistan remains a sufficient factor to require 100,000 troops in Afghanistan"?

Secretary GATES. First of all, I would say that I consider the situation today, in this respect, more dangerous than it was a year or 18 months ago, because it is clear that—just on the Pakistani side of the border, that al-Qaeda is deeply involved with the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, the Pakistani Taliban, in planning attacks against the Pakistani Government and people, and attempting to destabilize that government. And the al-Qaeda provides them with technical information, provides them with operational information and support.

Al-Qaeda also is supportive of the Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, the terrorist group that is responsible for the bombings in Mumbai. And al-Qaeda is providing them with targeting information and helping them in their plotting in India, clearly with the idea of provoking a conflict between India and Pakistan that would destabilize Pakistan. They also are very much involved with the Afghan Taliban. And so, they are supporting all of these different groups in ways that are destabilizing, not just for Afghanistan, but for the entire region. And al-Qaeda is at the heart of it. And whether or not the terrorists are homegrown, when we trace their roots, they almost all end up back in this border area of Afghanistan and Pakistan, whether they're from the United States or Somalia or the United Kingdom or elsewhere.

And so, what we see is al-Qaeda, despite their being under pressure and despite their limited numbers and despite the fact that there are few of them in Afghanistan right now, that they are taking advantage of the situation in the region to play a very destabilizing and dangerous role.

What they have learned, as I suggested in my remarks, is that, in an ungoverned space, you have the opportunity to recover, reconstitute, and reassert yourself, which is exactly what the Taliban did in Pakistan over a period of about 3 years, and now are in a position where, with their momentum, are challenging, successfully to this point, significant numbers of modern armies.

So, the point is that if given—if parts of southern and eastern Afghanistan once again come under the control of the Taliban, that would be space in which the al-Qaeda could reconstitute itself, very much as the Taliban did in Pakistan just in recent years, and then expand their operations and their capabilities to launch attacks against Europe and the United States and, really, all over the world.

The CHAIRMAN. If—

Secretary CLINTON. Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. So—go ahead.

Secretary CLINTON. I would just add, to what Secretary Gates said, the following three points.

First, we have increasingly come to see these organizations not as separate independent operators that occasionally cooperate with one another, but as part of a syndicate of terrorism. They—the level of operational cooperation, training, equipping, financing, has grown exponentially. And at the head of the table, like an old Mafia kind of diagram, sits al-Qaeda. And al-Qaeda still has much greater access to the financing that comes from the gulf, and is able, then, to support a lot of their Taliban partners in their various undertakings. Al-Qaeda's experience in recruiting foreign fighters has aided and abetted certain of the Taliban operations inside Pakistan and Afghanistan. The Pakistani military has told us that they've picked up foreign fighters in South Waziristan. And the continuing training of new recruits, people that then go off to Yemen or Somalia, or, indeed, Denver, has a global reach that is unmatched.

Second, as Admiral Mullen said, the planning and the, sort of, brains of the operation with respect to plots against us remains al-Qaeda, but, increasingly, the Taliban are the bricklayers. You know, the recent arrests here in our own country trace back to Pakistan and trace back, certainly in the case of Zazi, directly to an al-Qaeda-originated training camp and training program.

But, finally, and perhaps most chillingly, the fact that Pakistan is a nuclear power raises the stakes enormously. There is no doubt in any of our minds that al-Qaeda seeks nuclear materiel, seeks access to nuclear weapons. The challenges within the Pakistani military, that Admiral Mullen can address, because he's done yeoman's work in working on a—building a better relationship. We walked away from the Pakistani military, you know; we were sanctioned, we couldn't cooperate with them. And there's a real gap between the leadership of the Pakistani military that ever trained in or connected with the American or the British or the Australian military and, sort of, the younger officers. And there's a real struggle going on, for influence, for the kind of advantage that would give this syndicate of terror just a horrific challenge to all of us.

But, I think—if Admiral Mullen could have the time to add to that.

Admiral MULLEN. Mr. Chairman, I've certainly—agree with the nexus. And I've watched it, over the last year to two, that these groups are coming together.

I'm—and this—Secretary Gates talked about the linkage between the LET and al-Qaeda. And it's actually not—so, it's not local anymore. And that is an example of the collaboration that's going on with all these units. I was struck, as I'm sure you were, in Mumbai, that a terrorist outfit could literally generate that kind of attack and then bring two nation-states closer to conflict. That is not an achievement lost on anyone that observed that. And those kinds of plots continue. The ability to destabilize Pakistan, seeking that nuclear materiel—those nuclear materials and weapons—it's extraordinarily dangerous. And I recognize both the price we pay, in blood and treasure, and the cost—that it costs our government, specifically. These—and my own view of this is that, without addressing this, the potential risks of something recurring, on the

order of what happened before, is out there, and the enormous costs that would be associated with that.

So, this decision and investment now is absolutely critical. And the terrorist central cells that are there in this border, that's really—this is really the headquarters. There are other franchise cells throughout—in places like Yemen and Somalia, but this is the most dangerous one. They all need to be addressed. This has a significantly more capable center of gravity, if you will, because of all the organizations that are associated with al-Qaeda in this border area.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I appreciate that.

Secretary GATES. Can I just add one sentence? The—

The CHAIRMAN. Please.

Secretary GATES [continuing]. Just in terms of underscoring the central role of al-Qaeda in the Afghan-Pakistan border area—the reality is that al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, al-Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula, place high value on their affiliation with al-Qaeda in that border area. And there is ample intelligence showing other terrorist groups that basically are in the application process to become affiliates of al-Qaeda. So, the central mythology and the central role of these people is still there.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, let me just say that I think that it's going to be very important in the next days to really build this linkage and case so that people have a real understanding of the importance. And it obviously begs the question—and I don't want to abuse the time periods here, so I won't ask it now; I'm sure colleagues will follow up on it—but, it clearly begs the question of Pakistan's cooperation and what we can expect in these next months. And I'm sure colleagues will follow up on that.

I did want to mention congratulations on Chelsea's engagement. I just finished playing "wedding planner" for my younger daughter, and my advice to you is: hire a professional.

Secretary CLINTON. Are you available? [Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. I am not—distinctly not a professional.

VOICE. Can't afford him. [Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Lugar.

Senator LUGAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Now, let me follow up on your questions, as well as the responses of the witnesses.

Secretary Clinton, in your testimony you said, "We will work with the Afghan and Pakistani Governments to eliminate safe havens for those plotting attacks against us, our allies, and our interests." As an additional point you say, "We will develop a long-term sustainable relationship with Afghanistan and Pakistan so we do not repeat the mistakes of the past."

Now, each of you responded in your testimonies to the thought that al-Qaeda or other terrorist groups may be becoming increasingly diffuse, by saying, "Of course. But, this border area is significantly different." Admiral Mullen, you pointed out again that this area is unique as it would likely serve as the base for the planning of future terrorist attacks against the United States. Secretary Gates, you just mentioned how even in the Maghreb and elsewhere, they feed into the so-called spiritual or intellectual, leadership that is coming out of the border area.

I would like each of you to further expound on a view we have heard you all espouse, that “We believe that a strong, stable, democratic Pakistan must be a key partner for the United States, an ally against violent extremism.” Of course that is correct. But, a number of historians have come before this committee in previous discussions of these matters and they’ve made comments such as this, that, “The al-Qaeda in Afghanistan has sometimes been useful for Pakistan to at least influence, if not control, things over in Afghanistan so that India would not have a strong influence there.” When the Indians were here visiting with you recently, they certainly expressed some feeling of exclusion that came not only from Pakistan, but of Pakistan’s use of the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Recently, the three of you have been engaging in active diplomacy in Pakistan, and, collectively, with the President, the Vice President, General Jones, and others, have convinced the Pakistani military that they ought to do something about Pakistani Taliban in Swat Valley and elsewhere. It is possible that this success also has to do with a change in viewpoint of the Pakistani military establishment.

But, we still get back to the point that we’re talking about, this border area which is comprised of two countries. On one side, we are going to emplace additional troops dealing with these 11 provinces in Afghanistan. What is not clear is precisely what is going to happen in Pakistan in this alliance of the two of us, the United States and Pakistan. And you would say, “Well, for good reason. Don’t be naive. This is a very difficult situation.” As you said, Secretary Clinton, we have a long way to go. This is a growing relationship. You’ve been out in the countryside, visiting places the President of the country has not chosen to visit as he is huddled there in the capital. Indeed, this is very tough business.

I’d like to ask all of you about what I see as some of our crucial objectives in our relationship with Pakistan and continued engagement in the region. I agree with the chairman on the importance of this concentration on the number of troops, the number of months, and of whatever is going to happen in the urban areas of the 11 provinces. But, what is crucial is whether any of the three of you, or all of you, or the President, the Vice President, General Jones, or anyone else in your team, is going to be able to deal with the leadership in Pakistan, whether it be the civil, military, or intelligence leadership, so that they are prepared to face what we are all seeing as the problem: the continued presence of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda in the border area. No one wants to talk about Osama bin Laden. Isn’t this a major target? Isn’t this a reason why continued warfare is necessary?

Now, if it is so, we’d better talk about it directly to the Pakistanis. This being a public hearing, the Pakistanis are hearing that loud and clear, and they’re going to have to respond.

Now, it is all well and good for us to say the Pakistanis have got to be stable over the long run with regard to their nuclear weapons. Well, of course they need to be stable. They understand that. They often have resented us talking about their nuclear weapons, quite apart from the thought we might protect them and their nuclear weapons, as this is in our own interests.

Progressing from the President's plan is certainly not the end of the story. Whether this plan works or not may depend upon personal diplomacy and the ability of leadership in Pakistan to come to very different, significant conclusions from the past in terms of their view on the best way forward to improve their welfare. I'd like to ask any of you how rapidly you think this can occur. In 12 months? Eighteen months? Two years? In other words, it better occur soon or we're going to have the shifting of people back and forth across the border, even as we have military success, as we will, in the provinces of Afghanistan.

Would anyone want to respond?

Secretary CLINTON. Well, Senator Lugar, I'll start, and then I'm sure my colleagues would want to add to what I say.

I share your sense of urgency, your analysis of the challenges that we confront, but I think we have to look very clear-eyed at where we are starting from. When I went through my round of confirmation hearings and then, sort of, introductory hearings in the House—and that was back in January—I said, at the time, that it was hard to believe that the Pakistani Government was not going after the direct threats that it faced from within its own borders. And that caused a big outcry in Pakistan. But, I think it's significant that we're sitting here today, having seen two major military operations after the failure of some kind of accommodation and unsuccessful peace agreements were finally recognized.

We are now making the case to our counterparts in Pakistan, both in the civilian and the military leadership, that the efforts they have made against the TTP, primarily in Swat and now in Waziristan and the Mehsud tribal core, are necessary, but far from sufficient, efforts to protect themselves, that this syndicate, this network of terrorism has to be addressed, that whatever the utility of any of these groups might have been in the past, they have morphed into a form that poses a threat to the Pakistani Government.

And this is an argument that, I think, takes time to make. It is certainly an argument each of us, plus others, have carried repeatedly, and will continue to do so. But, there is a great gulf of mistrust. Secretary Gates can speak very eloquently, since he was involved, in the 1980s, in working with the Pakistani Government to put together the mujahideen that led to the overthrow of the Soviet Union, but which the Pakistanis feel like we then walked away from helping them cope with. And they accommodated themselves, they went into survival mode, and maybe even saw some certain advantages flowing from those relationships, advantages that they were kind of making lemonade out of lemons in order to obtain.

So, I think your analysis is right, but we're dealing with a sovereign country that has a very clear idea of who they think their overall enemy is—namely, India—but who has slowly been convinced, because of what's happened inside their own territory, that they have to take action. And I think that that will continue to lead to positive steps.

Senator LUGAR. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Feingold.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

It is an honor to have this distinguished panel of witnesses here today. I am pleased that the President has set a goal for when we will begin reducing troop levels; however, I am disappointed that he's decided to escalate our military presence and did not give any goal or timeframe for when our massive military operations in Afghanistan will actually end. I do not support the decision to prolong and expand a risky and unsustainable strategy in the region. And, while I support ongoing civilian engagement in Afghanistan and counterterrorism efforts in the region, I do not believe more American lives should be risked for a war that no longer serves our most pressing national security interests. We must promptly transition to a sustainable, targeted counterterrorism strategy for the region and the world, one that is as agile and global as the enemy we confront: al-Qaeda.

So, rather than focusing so much of our attention and resources on Afghanistan, I think we need a comprehensive, global strategy that divides al-Qaeda from populations that have principally local grievances. We need to improve our intelligence capabilities, build partnerships with legitimate local partners, and, if appropriate, utilize targeted tactical operations.

Secretary Gates, you have argued that we must continue to pour our resources into Afghanistan or it would be perceived as a victory by al-Qaeda. And I have to say, I am somewhat less concerned about the "perception" of victory and more focused on actually defeating al-Qaeda for real.

I think the best way to do that is to recognize that we're dealing, as you have recognized, with a global enemy with a very limited presence in Afghanistan. Al-Qaeda's stated objective is to bankrupt the United States. So, I guess my first question is, Do you at least acknowledge that investing over \$100 billion in just one country, in 1 year alone, risks degrading our long-term ability to relentlessly pursue al-Qaeda around the globe?

Secretary Gates.

Secretary GATES. Well, I think, first of all, just for clarity, the costs that we are looking at for fiscal year 2010 for both the wars, in Iraq and Afghanistan, will be about \$20 billion less than we spent in 2008. And I realize that's small comfort, given how much we spent in 2008. But, I think the—I go back to the chairman's comment, What are the consequences, what are the costs, of Taliban being able to control space in Afghanistan, and on the Pakistani side of the border, that gives al-Qaeda the ability to reconstitute itself and perhaps provoke a war between India and Pakistan or get access to nuclear weapons from Pakistan?

Senator FEINGOLD. Mr. Secretary, I understand that that's your view of not doing something. But, my question is, Once we spend this \$100 billion, what are the consequences for our resources in all the other places that we're talking about here?

Secretary GATES. Well, I think—

Senator FEINGOLD. That there's another side to this.

Secretary GATES [continuing]. I think that we have, frankly, adequately resourced the effort to go after terrorism on a global basis. We certainly have had successful operations, some of which have been in the newspapers, and we are devoting a lot of effort, and have received resources from the Congress, to the kind of part-

nering that you have described, in terms of trying to root out these terrorist organizations.

I will tell you, having come back to government after being gone for 13 or 14 years, the improvement in the quality of our intelligence, in terms of being able to go after terrorists, and in the depth of our intelligence liaison relationships with other countries, is a world apart from what I saw in 1993, when I retired. So, we have made, I think, good investments, and these investments continue, in terms of going after the global threat. But, it's important to recognize where the home nest is, and to deal with that, as well.

Senator FEINGOLD. Well, I appreciate that. I question whether we're adequately resourcing some other critical places around the world that I've spent a fair amount of time studying. I won't get into the specifics of it, but it's something we can discuss in the future.

Admiral Mullen, in his assessment, General McChrystal stated that even a "properly resourced" military strategy would still leave large swaths of Afghanistan outside government control. Indeed, as we've increased levels of troops in the south, attacks have grown more deadly in the north.

What are the chances that an increase in troop levels will only push militants into different regions?

Admiral MULLEN. Senator Feingold, the principal threat, I think, will continue to remain in the south and in the east. We recognize, in the north, over the last year or so, that it has gotten more difficult. But, General McChrystal is confident that the spread, if you will, there—and also, to some degree, to the west, although not really significant at this point—can be handled by our NATO forces. And, in fact, the NATO forces that—we have expectations for receiving additional NATO forces here, commitments in the near future, to address that. His main effort is in the south. That really is where he will focus most of his troops, supported by his efforts in the east. And then, that really gets to the most critical areas, from a Pashtun standpoint, from a border standpoint. And the intent of this strategy—and his, certainly, to support it—is not to do counterinsurgency all over the country. We don't see it growing to a point, at this point, where it would turn into something equal to the kind of threat that we have and see in the south and in the east, up north.

Senator FEINGOLD. Admiral, several witnesses testified before this committee that the majority of people we're currently fighting in Afghanistan do not have an international terrorist agenda, but, rather, "tend to coalesce against what is perceived as an outsider." And one former CIA station chief in Islamabad has testified that if we send 40,000 additional troops to Afghanistan, it would only produce 40,000 additional militants. Actually, I'd like both you and Secretary Clinton to answer this. Is there a danger that our current strategy has provoked greater militancy and has thereby made it harder for us to isolate members of al-Qaeda?

Admiral MULLEN. We haven't seen this. I think General McChrystal said, not too long after he got there—and this gets to the whole occupation issue—we know we're not an occupying force. Obviously, our actions need to support our intent with respect to that, which is very clear. But, the Afghans that we engage with are

much more concerned with what we do with our forces, as opposed to how many they are. McChrystal has shifted the focus to secure them—population security for them. That’s what they seek more than anything else right now. So, we certainly—while I recognize that, particularly because of history, we haven’t seen that extensively, nor have we seen an extensive generation of additional militants, per se, although that is a concern. And we’re looking to get as many of them off the battlefield, in this new strategy, as possible, as well, with respect—by reconciliation, reintegration, et cetera. But, that’s got to happen through security—better security.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you, Admiral.

Madam Secretary.

Secretary CLINTON. Senator, I would just add three points.

One, General McChrystal significantly changed the way that our military forces and NATO ISAF conduct themselves with respect to the civilian population. He significantly tightened the rules for air support for any kind of combat in order to limit the number of civilian casualties. And he also issued orders concerning nighttime raids, particularly with the use of dogs. When I was in Afghanistan, I had a number of people tell us that made a huge difference.

Second, in every reliable research that I have access to, there is no appetite for the return of the Taliban, whatsoever. What we have seen an increase in, over the last several years, has been more hedging that people are understandably nervous about, “What’s the outcome, and whose side should I and my family end up on?”

But, there is no appetite for the return of the Taliban, and we do not see what is a legitimate concern to keep in mind, the potential reaction that would lead to increased insurgents.

We also know that a lot of the people who are in the Taliban do not share the overall goal, which has morphed. You know, the Omar—the Mullah Omar core group that heads the Afghan Taliban and is closely allied with al-Qaeda has morphed into, not just a nationalistic Islamist group, but now kind of buying into this caliphate idea.

And therefore, a lot of the people who have been conscripted, in effect, into service on behalf of the Taliban have no real allegiance. So, part of the challenge here—and it’s something that we are working on with President Karzai; obviously, we have a whole team embedded in NATO ISAF under retired British general, General Lamb, who had played a major role in Iraq, with the Sons of Iraq in *The Awakening*, is to begin to do a much more thoughtful job to separate out—I mean, the Taliban are a homegrown entity. The Talib, the students, you know, they rose up, in part, against the oppression of the Soviet regime, the chaos of the warlord era, and a desire to have an Islamist state that imposed shariah order, et cetera. So, we know that there is an opportunity for those who renounce al-Qaeda violence, et cetera, to be reintegrated and to play a part in the political system. Now, we might not like their political agenda. I’ll just put that on the table. You know, Senator Boxer and Senator Shaheen and I would not particularly be enthusiastic about a nonviolent, peaceful Taliban political movement that legitimately played within the democracy. But, you know,

there is that possibility that I think we have to recognize, if they do move into reintegration.

Senator FEINGOLD. Well, my time's up, but I just want to say, Madam Secretary, thank you for a thoughtful answer. I'm sure you'd agree that it's at our peril that we minimize the potential feelings of the Afghan people for an extended presence there. I know you're aware of that, but we have to be so careful not to minimize the importance of that.

I thank the Chair.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Feingold.

Senator Corker.

Senator CORKER. Mr. Chairman, thank you.

And thank each of you for your service. I very much respect the positions that each of you hold, and realize that there are no easy answers. I know this has been very complex, and I know it's very agonizing to come before panels like this when you're part of the administration.

I do hope—and I see the chairman has left—but, since this is so Pakistan-centric, I hope that Ann Patterson—I know she's here—will be made available and we will have hearings with her and others involved in Pakistan, maybe Petraeus. My understanding is, we're trying to set up McChrystal and Eikenberry this next week. Is that correct?

Secretary CLINTON. Senator Corker, that is correct. And we would certainly make any witness available. We might want to suggest that you plan a short public hearing and a longer classified hearing. I think that would be very useful to get at a lot of the issues that both Senator Lugar and Chairman Kerry have raised.

Senator CORKER. Well, I think if we're going to have the classified briefing, which would be great, the station chief in Pakistan would be very beneficial. But, you all can make those decisions. I hope at least we'll have a public hearing with Ann Patterson, who is an outstanding ambassador and certainly knows what's happening in that area.

You can't help but be in Afghanistan and know that part of what is driving what we're doing there is just the inertia, the fact that we're there and we're loathe to leave before success, whatever that means, and the fact that we're trying to prove to Pakistan and Afghanistan citizens that we're real friends. So, my point is, is that much of what you all have said, no doubt, is true, but there's an underlying current that creates an inertia, I think, for us to be there. And I know a lot of comments have been made about the fact that it's very clear what we're doing now, and maybe we weren't clear in the past. And there's no doubt we were not clear in the past.

I would say that I still—I have average intelligence, and I think it's still pretty unclear to me what we're doing. I know, last March the President announced a more narrowed mission, supposedly. It was evident to me it was anything but a more narrowed mission.

I know, on September 22, General Jones came in and created—showed us the metrics that are being used to measure what's happening. I know the chairman was present. It was very evident—and I don't mean to be pejorative—but we were nation-building in Afghanistan. The metrics very much lay out a nation-building in

Afghanistan. Richard Holbrooke has got a whole team of people that—he would call it “rebuilding a nation,” because he certainly goes back in history to the times when Afghanistan was more of a functioning country. But, my point is, it—you know, look, there’s no question that the metrics laid out in September were nation-building.

I met with Secretary Gates, who I greatly respect, at the Pentagon, and we talked about a partial nation-building, and now we talk about, you know, coming home in 18 months, with our troops—I realize civilians will stay after that point in time, and I realize that the coming-home part, based on testimony yesterday, was really just a throwaway comment to sort of appease people who are concerned about the buildup.

So, to me, it’s really not clear. And I think that the American people, who are going to be—the civilian side, in particular, is going to be, for decades—the whole budget of Afghanistan today is about \$890 million. The 400,000 security troops we’re talking about are about \$10 billion a year. And I’m wondering, Madam Secretary, whether it would make sense to really lay out clearly what all of this means, from the standpoint of support for the next several decades, the amount of civilian activity, and just from the standpoint of security, what we really anticipate doing, over time? I know, in 18 months, the buildup, securitywise, is going to be lesser than 400,000, but I know, over time, at least—unless it’s changed again—that has been our goal, between Afghan police and army.

So, I would say to you that it’s been very unclear, and it’s been like a sine wave, over the last 9 months, as to what we’re actually doing there. So, I’d love some edification.

Secretary CLINTON. Well, Senator Corker, I’ll do my best, and then perhaps I could bring in some reinforcements, here, on either side of me.

First, let me just provide the context, the best I can. In our view, looking back, we never adequately resourced the mission in Afghanistan. That’s just a fact. And I think this committee’s work and reports certainly give a lot of credence and support to that view.

There were, basically, 30,000 troops for a number of years, with an additional, you know, 30–40,000 NATO troops, and we didn’t really have the kind of commitment that we were needing.

We also transferred a lot of the assets that should have been used to support the troops we had in Afghanistan to Iraq. That’s just a fact, as well.

So, when the President took office, there were backed-up requests for additional troops, that had been in the pipeline. And I personally know several of the people who were commanders on the ground in Afghanistan, going back to 2001; there were always additional troop requests, which, because of the move toward Iraq, were never given what was requested. So, that’s part of the history.

There was a pending troop request that the Bush administration—and Secretary Gates can speak to this—looked on favorably as they were going out the door, of 17,000 troops, and then a request they left for President Obama of 21,000.

And so, right out of the bat, the President’s, you know, given a—what is a 38,000-troop request, and he orders a very quick study,

that Bruce Riedel, a very experienced intelligence professional, headed up, along with Richard Holbrooke and Michelle Flournoy, from the Defense Department. And, as the President said when he made the announcement back in March, “We’re going to go forward with these troops. They’ve been pending. There seems to be an argument for them. Our goal is to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda. We are changing commanders, something that is rare to do. But, we’re going to look at this again as soon as the election’s over,” because the election season in Afghanistan was taking hold.

Well, that’s exactly what we’ve done. Unfortunately, the election lasted a very long time, until, thanks to Chairman Kerry, we finally began to bring it to a conclusion.

So, I don’t blame you, and I don’t blame anybody, for wondering, you know, where we are, because of the history we inherited and our effort to, frankly, make sense and rationalize what was happening, and to put it into an integrated civilian-military strategy. One of the first things President Karzai said to me, when I saw him Kabul, was, “I’m confused.” You know, and he’s talked about how he said, “I understood what we were supposed to be doing from 2001 to 2005. It was the war on terror. And then all of a sudden I started hearing people in your government saying we didn’t need to kill bin Laden and Mullah Omar, and I didn’t know what that meant.” Well—so, there’s been some confusion, which, frankly, this administration has been trying to sort through. And we think we’ve got it about as right as you get it, given where we started from.

There is no doubt that putting these additional troops in, in our mind, is necessary to reverse the momentum of the Taliban, to demonstrate clearly to both the Afghans and the Pakistanis that we are serious about our resolve to work with them to try to stabilize their two countries, improve their security situation, and that we know it cannot be just a military undertaking; that’s why we’re emphasizing the civilian side of it.

So, ultimately, Senator, we are going to have to maintain civilian support for Afghanistan and Pakistan, going forward. We think that’s in our national interest, to do so.

But, I just want to make one final point. The July 2011 date is the date on which we begin to transfer authority and responsibility to Afghan security forces. Now, what we have tried to demonstrate is that the pace, the size of the drawdown is going to be determined in a responsible manner, based on the conditions that exist at the time. And if things are going well, a larger number of forces will be transitioned out, and the Afghans will be expected to take on greater responsibility. So, it is not contradictory to set a date certain, yet to condition it on the reality that we confront at that time.

Secretary GATES. Let me just say a word. I know that—time to move on. But, first of all, one of my concerns, coming out of the decisions in March was that it was clear they were interpreted as providing for full-scale nation-building and creating a strong central government in Afghanistan—

Senator CORKER. As were the metrics.

Secretary GATES [continuing]. Neither of which is achievable in any realistic timeframe, or sustainable, given the costs and everything else.

So, I would describe, in just a few sentences, what I believe our strategy is today, what these decisions represent. It is to reverse the momentum of the Taliban. It is to deny them control of territory in Afghanistan. It is to degrade their military capabilities and, at the same time, grow and strengthen the capabilities of the Afghan National Security Forces so that they can manage the internal security of their own country because they're dealing with better capabilities on their side and degraded capabilities on the Taliban side. This allows us to pull the bulk of our combat troops out and return, in terms that—as Senator Feingold put it, to more of a counterterrorism mission, because we don't have to worry about the security situation inside Afghanistan. You cannot do pure counterterrorism unless you have a government, or provincial and local governments, that create a hostile environment for the Taliban and that allow us to gather the information and intelligence that we need to do the counterterrorism.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Senator CORKER. Mr. Chairman, I—you stepped out for a second.

The CHAIRMAN. No, I heard that, and I'm happy to—happy to do that.

Senator CORKER. Are we going to have a second round, just—are we planning to do that or—

The CHAIRMAN. If we have time, we will try. Let's see where we are.

Senator CORKER. OK.

The CHAIRMAN. I'd like to do a second round, if they are able to, but we have a time constraint. We'll see what we can do.

Senator Boxer.

Senator BOXER. Thank you very much.

And thank you, all of you, for your dedicated service to our Nation. We all appreciate it.

In 2001, every Senator voted to go against those who attacked us using Afghanistan as the base. And President Bush, in a lot of our views, turned away from Afghanistan, clearly, toward a disastrous Iraq war. And many of us repeatedly urged an end to that war and a refocus on Afghanistan. Well, here we are, many years later, and Secretary Clinton is explaining the results of that neglect.

So, 5 months ago, after our President asked for 21,000 additional troops for Afghanistan, I supported that request. It wasn't easy for me, but I felt it was important to give him that chance to refocus. We also included funding for the women in Afghanistan, who have borne the brunt of the Taliban.

The President said when he announced his Afghanistan strategy, that he needed those 21,000 troops—now, this is just months ago—to, “take the fight to the Taliban in the south and the east, and give greater capacity to partner and train with Afghan security forces.” That's what he's saying again now. I agree with that mission.

So, I voted. We sent 21,000 more troops. And here's the thing. We're told, since we sent those troops, that the situation has deteriorated. And I would like to put into the record an interview with General McChrystal in which, basically, he said, “The Taliban—the

fight against the Taliban has gone downhill.” And that was since the 21,000 troops were sent.

[The article referred to follows:]

[From the New York Daily News, Sept. 25, 2009]

GEN. MCCHRYSAL: VIOLENCE IN AFGHANISTAN GETTING WORSE

(By Richard Sisk)

WASHINGTON.—The top U.S. commander in Afghanistan has admitted he was blindsided by the Taliban’s comeback this summer in the bloodiest fighting of the eight-year war.

“I think that in some areas that the breadth of the violence, the geographic spread of violence, is a little more than I would have gathered,” Army Gen. Stanley McChrystal said in a CBS “60 Minutes” interview to be broadcast Sunday.

Despite the influx of 22,000 troops, bringing U.S. troop levels to 68,000, McChrystal said the battle against the Taliban has gone downhill since he took command in June.

“They’re probably a little worse,” he said of conditions on the ground.

McChrystal said his focus was on limiting “collateral damage” to civilians.

“This civilian casualty issue is much more important that I even realized,” McChrystal said. “It is literally how we lose the war, or in many ways how we win it.”

McChrystal’s recent gloomy report on the status of the war and his pending request for more troops has touched off a fierce debate within the Obama administration, pitting supporters of the military against those favoring a more limited response targeting Al Qaeda in Pakistan.

The debate prompted McChrystal to tell the New York Times this week, “I have no intention of resigning.”

Senator BOXER. So, I would ask you, Why did the situation get worse in Afghanistan after we sent 21,000 more troops? And I guess I’d start with Secretary Gates.

Secretary GATES. Well, first of all, the full number of troops that the President authorized did not actually ultimately arrive in Afghanistan until late in the summer, early fall. The Marines arrived in southern Helmand in July. And, in fact, the reporting that we’re getting is that things have begun to get better in southern Helmand, where the Marines are. So, part of it has been a—first of all, it’s been—I think, when General McChrystal did his assessment, it was really, at least as far as I’m concerned, the first thoroughgoing assessment in the field on how things were going since I became Secretary, in December 2006. And I think what General McChrystal found, through doing that assessment and traveling all over the country and looking at the situation, was, as you just cited, that the situation was serious and deteriorating.

We got his report in late August, and, as you know, we’ve had this dialogue and effort inside the administration to determine what to do on the basis of that assessment. But, fundamentally, where the troops have arrived, the situation has stabilized, and in some cases gotten better. And what General McChrystal basically has said, that to stabilize the other areas, these additional forces are necessary.

And maybe, Admiral Mullen would like to add.

Senator BOXER. Well, before he does—and I will, of course, turn to Admiral Mullen—I just want to put in the record a GAO study that shows that, as we added more troops, the violence actually escalated.

[The information referred to follows:]

know this is correct, unless you disagree—that we have, now, 68,000 American troops on the ground. There's 36,231 NATO troops. That's 104,231. There's roughly 94,000 Afghan troops. And we won't count the 93,000 Afghan police, so we'll leave that aside. That's roughly 200,000 versus 22,000 Taliban and 100 Qaeda. So, my concern is—and this is why I interrupted you, just to focus on this—it doesn't seem to me to be a question of the numbers of troops. It's hard to say that 200,000 versus 22,000 is that different than 230,000 versus 22,000. It's the mission. And I guess what I'm sort of trying to probe here is, How are we going to change the mission from what President Obama outlined when I gave him my vote for the 21,000 troops?—which seems to me the same mission he's talking about now.

Admiral MULLEN. Three quick thoughts. One is, as we add more troops and face this growing insurgency, the level of violence is going to go up. It did in Iraq, in the surge; it will do that here, as well, and, I want to be very clear, that a very, certainly, tragic part of this, so will our casualties. That should not be out of the sight of anybody with respect to this over a period of time. But, it is the path to, actually, reduced number of casualties and a lower level of violence, first of all.

Second, McChrystal has changed the focus specifically to focus on the key population centers. Secretary Clinton talked about reducing the number of civilian casualties. Complete change in focus, from a leadership perspective.

Third, he's changed, dramatically, how we partner with the Afghan security forces, which we weren't doing before. We were mentoring them, training them. Now we're in the field with them, planning, living, fighting, et cetera.

So, those are fundamental shifts to get at achieving the success that I think is possible with these additional forces.

Senator BOXER. OK. I really appreciate—that's the best argument I've heard, but I still have tremendous doubts about the numbers. I just think the objectives you've outlined we ought to try to accomplish—with the numbers that are there.

Last question has to do with our forces, who are incredibly stressed. I know, Secretary Gates—

The CHAIRMAN. Actually, Senator—

Senator BOXER. This is the last question. Divorce is up, suicide's up, and psychological wounds are on the rise. So, my quick question is—we know some of our men and women have been deployed six or seven times. Are you confident, Secretary Gates, that we're no longer deploying servicemembers who are currently struggling with significant mental health problems from their prior tours?

Secretary GATES. I think the only thing I can say in response to that is, we are making every effort not to do that. We have put in place some very intensive screening processes. We have hired an enormous number of mental health care providers. We are trying to do everything we can to identify those who have problems, to encourage those who have problems to come forward and get treatment. The Army leadership, in particular, has been very aggressive in this area. Can I say with certainty that we're not deploying somebody who has severe problems? No. But, I can tell you we're making every effort to avoid doing so.

Senator BOXER. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Risch.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you for coming here today and helping and being engaged in this national dialogue on this important issue that we really need to do. I view this, really, not as a Republican problem or a Democrat problem; this is an American problem. After all, we were all Americans before we were Republicans or Democrats. And as polarized as this country is politically, this is an issue that we really, really all need to pull together on. And I appreciate you coming here and engaging in this conversation.

Regarding the President's recent announcement on strategy, I think that obviously he had choices, as the Commander in Chief. And I think anyone who knows anything about this issue has to be—has to have empathy for what he went through in making this decision.

This is a problem that one could characterize only as a Rubik's Cube on steroids. I mean, it is—it has so many facets, it's—it is difficult to wrestle with. And the conclusion one reaches quickly is that there are no good choices, there are only choices to be made that would be in the best interests of the American people.

Secretary Clinton observed that we don't hear much about positives from there. And that is true. And obviously, the media is much more interested in the negative than the positive. But, you know, our objective, when we went into Afghanistan—and I think everyone would agree with this—was to get al-Qaeda, to stop al-Qaeda, to squelch al-Qaeda. And that objective really has been met. We have run al-Qaeda out of Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the Taliban remain. And that—the relationship that Secretary Clinton described between al-Qaeda and the Taliban complicates the issue tremendously.

And the difficulty that we hear, of course, is that al-Qaeda has now migrated into western Pakistan, and there is a slow drip, if you would, of those people migrating into Yemen and Somalia, which is going to cause us a problem in the future, I would think.

But, in any event, I think that's a positive that we should look at, and the fact that we have driven al-Qaeda out of Afghanistan, but we have to remain—we have to deal with what's left over.

This is a question that I have, hopefully a brief question. As we build up now in Afghanistan, as the President has said we're going to do, and you look at what has happened in Iraq, whether you agree or disagree with whether we went there—whether we should have gone there in the first place or whether the surge was good or bad, things seem to be generally better in Iraq today than what they've been.

When you went through this exercise, was any consideration given to stepping up the drawdown in Iraq as we build up more quickly in Afghanistan? That is, did you consider stepping up the schedule for withdrawal from Iraq? Could I get a brief answer on that?

Secretary GATES. The answer is “No.” General Odierno has a plan, in terms of the drawdown, to get our combat forces out of Iraq by the end of August 2010, and all of our forces out by the end of 2011. He has found that the conditions, the improved condi-

tions that you referred to, in Iraq have allowed for the early withdrawal of at least one brigade; but, that was based on the decisions—on the situation in Iraq itself. So, there really—in none of our discussions, either in the Pentagon or in the interagency, was there a discussion of accelerating the drawdowns in Iraq.

Senator RISCH. Thank you.

Admiral MULLEN. If I could just add to that. In addition to the brigade, General Odierno has been very aware of the requirements for some of the key things—smaller forces, enabling forces—that he has agreed to transfer into Afghanistan. So, he's been very supportive of this overall approach, albeit very consistent with what the Secretary said, in terms of interagency consideration.

Senator RISCH. Thank you. And I'd encourage that we keep an eye on that, and anything that can be done to accelerate that, I think would be beneficial to everyone.

Secretary Clinton, you articulated, about as well as I've heard, trying to thread the needle on the business of our commitment. I heard you use the word "commitment." I heard you use the term "long haul." And those are at odds with a date. And that's a difficult needle to thread, because those people have got to be convinced that we do have a commitment, that we're there for the long haul, and yet, we say "July 2011." Well, you know, we really need to be clear on this, because the enemy is going to take their calendar out, they're going to circle "July of 2011," and say, "Well, you know, just like America, we are going to reevaluate, at that point, whether we're going to step down until then and gear up at that point."

So, I—and again, I know it's a difficult needle to thread, because the American people, including myself, want to see success, they want to see us out of Afghanistan. And yet, at the same time, the people there have got to be convinced that somehow we are going to protect them if they cooperate with us.

So, I—and I—with all due respect—and I don't mean this, maybe, the way it's going to sound, but I heard—Secretary Gates, I heard you talk about "a target" yesterday, when you were talking about July 2011. And yet, the impression I got from the President was, it isn't a target as much as a hard date for starting to drawdown. And those two things are very difficult to reconcile. So, again, I'm being critical, here, without an answer, but that is a difficult needle to thread, but you're going to have to do it.

Secretary GATES. Let me just start, briefly, by saying that I think, through the course of the questioning yesterday, what I was trying to make clear is that the date of July 2011 to begin thinning our forces and transitioning the security responsibilities to the Afghans is a firm date that the President has established, but the pace of that drawdown, the location of the drawdown, and so on, will be conditions-based and, to use his words, a responsible drawdown, as we have done in Iraq. But, there should be—as I said in my opening statement, and as Secretary Clinton just said a few minutes ago, July 2011 is the time that the President has picked when we have to begin drawing down.

Now, let me just reiterate the balancing act that we've—the balance that we've tried to establish here. We are sending a signal of significant, I think, commitment to be successful in Afghanistan,

with the deployment of these additional forces. But, at the same time—and I—and as I said yesterday, one of the things that became clear at the end of the surge in Iraq was that the Iraqis wanted us out of the country as quickly as possible. That is not necessarily the case in Afghanistan. They live in a rough neighborhood, and our sense is, there are a number of Afghans that would like to have us hang around, and the United States Army and Marine Corps protect them for the indefinite future.

So, one of the purposes of this date, an important element of this date, is to put the Afghans on notice that—and give them a sense of urgency that they must begin to accept their responsibility for their own security, and it's going to start then, because—so, they have to get their men recruited, get them trained, and get them into the field and into combat with us.

So, it's a combination of sending a message of commitment, but, at the same time, putting the Afghans on notice that the time is coming when they are going to have to establish their own security—or, maintain their own security.

Senator RISCH. I couldn't agree with you more that the sense of urgency really seems to be lacking there, and they need to be—as the chairman had said earlier, that they really need to have a sense of urgency instilled in them. And they think in terms of centuries, we think in terms of months, so it's a difficult proposition.

Thank you very much.

Admiral MULLEN. Senator, could I just add one comment to that? I mean, this date has also been described as arbitrary. It's not arbitrary at all. On the military side, we feel that that timeframe, between roughly July 2009, when the Marines arrive in Helmand, and into July 2011, we will know whether we're going to be successful or not. And so—and thinking that this is the—believing this is the right strategy and that we will be successful, we think that time of beginning the transfer of security responsibility and the transition is the right time. And then, again, that—responsibly and based on conditions. But, it was not an arbitrary date. It is the third year—third summer, if you will, that the Marines will be in Helmand, and we will have a clear indication from three seasons, if you will, at the heart of the fighting season there, that—which way this is going.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Admiral.

Senator LUGAR [presiding]. Senator Menendez.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you.

Thank you all for your service to our country. I think we're all—a debt of gratitude, especially at a most difficult time.

You know, Admiral Mullen, I heard you say that the under-resourcing of our engagement in Afghanistan over the last 4 or 5 years has brought us to where we are today. So, that, to me, means that our adventure in Iraq has created a set of circumstances where we have underresourced our efforts in Afghanistan. Is that a fair comment?

Admiral MULLEN. The—as I indicated, I think, in my previous comments, clearly the priority and the direction I had, both as chairman and as the chief of a service, was to resource Iraq. And we were balancing deployments, balancing time at home, and we—

Senator MENENDEZ. So, you did not—

Admiral MULLEN [continuing]. Could not resource Afghanistan.

Senator MENENDEZ. So, you couldn't resource Iraq and resource Afghanistan as you needed to.

Admiral MULLEN. That's correct.

Senator MENENDEZ. Now, I look at this July 2011 date, and I see it as clearly aspirational. And I think we need to be honest with the American people. Can any of you tell me that, after July 2011, that we won't have tens of thousands of troops years after that date?

Secretary GATES. I think that the President, and we, have been clear that July 2011 is the beginning of a process of drawing down in Afghanistan. That process will be based on the conditions on the ground. But, it—you know, the President is very—I think I can speak for him, and Secretary Clinton can correct me if I get it wrong—the President, throughout this process, was very concerned about an open-ended conflict, of just unending commitment of significant numbers of troops and dollars in this. And so, I think that, you know, he has not put deadlines, in terms of when our troops will all be out, but clearly he sees the—July 2011, as I said in my opening statement, an inflection point where we begin to draw down those forces in Afghanistan, and with a view to transferring this responsibility to the Afghans over a period of probably 2 or 3 years.

Senator MENENDEZ. Mr. Secretary, I appreciate that, and you've reiterated it several times. Let me go back to my question.

Can any of you tell this committee that, in fact, after July 2011, we won't have tens of thousands of troops for years after that date?

Secretary CLINTON. Well, Senator, I can tell you what the intention is. And the intention is—

Senator MENENDEZ. But, you—I don't—Madam Secretary, I don't want to hear what the intention is. I want to know, Can you tell the committee that there won't be tens of thousands of troops after July 2011, for years after that? It's unlikely, right? It's—

Secretary CLINTON. No, I—

Senator MENENDEZ [continuing]. Unlikely.

Secretary CLINTON. I can only answer the way that I am comfortable in giving you the best information available at the moment, and that is that there is a convergence of opinion between us and President Karzai in his second term. In his inaugural address, he said he wanted the responsibility, and would be prepared for the responsibility within 3 years, for Afghan control over many important parts of the country—right now, about 60 percent of the country is not contested—and within 5 years, the Afghans would be responsible for their entire security.

So, that is his aspiration. It happens to be very much in line with what we want to see happen. There will be, starting in July 2011, troops withdrawn, based on conditions. Sitting here today, I would believe that we will be able to start the transition, as planned, in 2011. We also know that there will be, probably for the foreseeable future, a drawdown and transfer out of combat troops, but a request for continuing logistical support for the Afghan security force.

So, you know, that is the kind of, you know, target that we're aiming at.

Senator MENENDEZ. Admiral Mullen, is it true that right now the Afghan Army only has about 10,000 soldiers that can operate without us being alongside them?

Admiral MULLEN. That's a—it is a small percentage, yes, sir.

Senator MENENDEZ. So, what we are talking about is a massive increase that we seek in the Afghan army, which presents a daunting obstacle, considering the fact that finding sufficient literate recruits, and reversing what is an abysmal retention rate, is a huge challenge. Something we haven't done in 8 years, we're going to do in 18 months. And a large national army also requires a strong and capable central government to command it, and clearly a permanent foreign subsidy.

So, when I hear these dates, I believe that they are as solid as quicksand and, at best aspirational. And I appreciate the aspiration, but the reality is, as someone who has to cast a vote for that money that will be coming forth, I can't tell the people of New Jersey, or this country, that we are doing that clearly on aspirations. I think we need to be a lot more honest about our assessments.

You know, I see—this is putting a lot of eggs in President Karzai, who has been there since 2001, first as a transitional President, and then as an elected President. And what has he presided over? He's presided over massive corruption, where, you know, anywhere between 20 or 40 percent seems to be the going rate of skimming off of the taxpayers' money; where members of his family and members of certain ministers' families ultimately seem to do very well in business transactions, they travel to some of the best places in the world, they have bank accounts overseas, outside Afghanistan—and we want to say that we're really going to condition them? I'd like to see us condition their travel and their bank accounts to make sure that we're not going to see the continued corruption. That's a serious effort to have some type of control and say that we're not having a blank check.

You know, I look at President Karzai, when he makes his speech about “my brother Taliban”—well, maybe there will be a day of reconciliation, but first you've got to fight the Taliban before you get to the point of reconciliation, so that they understand there is a need for reconciliation.

And so, it worries me that a lot of what we're putting our eggs in, here, is someone who doesn't even speak in the terms of fighting the enemy, and an Afghan police that is so rife with corruption and is cooperating with the Taliban.

And then, I look at the disadvantage of having Karzai there if our national security is as you've defined it, as creating stability and creating an opportunity for the Afghan Government to ultimately have the space and the time to fulfill what is ultimately nation-building, we still will have the security issue as a concern if Karzai doesn't perform, 18 months from now. We still will have that security issue.

So, as you've defined our national security interests, whether Karzai performs or not, we will be stuck in that set of circumstances. And that's a real problem.

I don't get a sense we have a clear civilian counterpart. Even General McChrystal says, "Who is my civilian counterpart?" And do we really believe that 974 civilian personnel versus 100,000 troops is going to meet the civilian aspect of this?

And finally, I get no sense that we have a Pakistan strategy. We have been talking about offering them a strategic relationship. They don't seem to want a strategic relationship. They want the money, they want the equipment, but, at the end of the day, they don't want a relationship that costs them too much. And it seems to me, the more we build up our troops in Afghanistan, the more reliant we become on the Pakistanis in a variety of ways.

So, I just don't get the sense, at this point in time, of a comprehensive policy that says that I should vote for billions of dollars more to send our sons and daughters in harm's way in a way that we will ultimately succeed in our national security goals. I hope I can be convinced before that vote comes, but, as of right now, I'm not.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN [presiding]. Do you want to convince him right now? [Laughter.]

Secretary CLINTON. I'll wait and do that, Mr. Chairman. We'll bring in more reinforcements.

The CHAIRMAN. Thanks.

Senator Isakson.

Senator ISAKSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I—first of all, thank you to all of the witnesses for your service and commitment to the country. I know the last thing you want to talk about is July 2011, but I do want to try and focus on something.

I've been very impressed, quite frankly, with what all of you said yesterday, in Armed Services and what you've said today. Admiral Mullen, I saw you this morning on FOX—with regard to this July 2011 date. Secretary Clinton, and I quote, said in her speech, "Just as we have done in Iraq, we will execute this transition responsibly, taking into account the conditions on the ground." You have said today, Secretary Gates, that the goal is to "clear, hold, build, and transfer," which is what we did in Iraq. We transferred authority; now the Iraqis are in control, and I think that's the goal all of us want in Afghanistan.

The problem on the July 2011 date is the concern a lot of people have that there's one constituency we're not talking to yet. We're talking to the American people, who want to win and come home. That's what they want to do. We're talking to the Afghans and President Karzai about taking responsibility for their own country. "The United States is not going to be your surrogate army, and we're not going to stay forever." And that's important. But, al-Qaeda and the Taliban are the other constituency, and this July 2011 date, if they interpret it as an end game for us, gives them some opportunity. So, I think statements like what you said, Secretary Clinton, about being determined by the outcome on the ground and the circumstances on the ground, and Admiral Mullen, you've been quite clear, and Secretary Gates, you said yesterday that the President has the—can change his mind anytime he wants to, based on the circumstances that take place.

I'm not asking a question, but I'm going to tell you why the confusion still exists with some of us who are scared about sending the wrong signal. White House Press Secretary Gibbs, this morning, according to an article by Chip Reid of CBS News, in responding to a question about the July 2011 date, said the following, and I quote, "The President told me it is locked in, there's no flexibility, troops will start coming home July 2011, period. It's etched in stone. Gibbs said he even had the chisel." That type of statement is not helpful to that constituency, being al-Qaeda and the Taliban, who don't need to be encouraged that there's a tolerance level beyond which we won't go in this battle, because each of you said that this is the epicenter of Islamic terrorism. I believe that too. The intelligence that all of us have seen is that way. And as we speak to our constituencies, the Americans and the Afghans, we've got to also understand that we're talking to the Taliban and al-Qaeda, and our resolve has to be there or the commitment we're making to these troops is not going to have the force behind it that it needs to have.

So, I'm not asking you a question. I don't want to put you between Mr. Gibbs and yourselves and your excellent testimony today, but that is the open question that, to me, has to be dealt with in delivering the message. And I won't ask any of you to have to respond to that, but I think it's important.

Two questions from me. On the Taliban and al-Qaeda, have we—are we tracking their source of arms? Do we know where they're getting their arms? You had referred, Admiral Mullen, to the skill level of the encounters we had had most recently with them, which tells me they have both the equipment and the leadership that they can fight a pretty doggone good battle. Where are they getting this from? Is it coming from Iran? Is it coming out of Pakistan? Is it a combination? Do we know?

Admiral MULLEN. The, probably, most significant threat that we see for our people is the IED network, that is growing in Afghanistan. And actually, an awful lot of that's homegrown. It's—there's not a lot coming in from the outside. Rather than specific arms, certainly financing, we're trying to pay attention to that, where they're getting their finances from. Some of it's coming from the opium piece, some of it's coming from the gulf, some of it's coming from the fact that they tax like crazy; you know, they tax all the locals. So, trying to impact that—and actually, we've put people in place to focus on this specifically in Afghanistan.

So, from that standpoint, those are the focus areas, rather than the individual weapons. At least it's my experience in that part of the world, you don't run into anybody that doesn't have a weapon. It's a question of who they're going to use it against. It—so, from that standpoint, we're hard after that.

Secretary GATES. Let me give you an example on the IEDs. The most devastating IEDs that are being used against our troops and against our MRAPs and so on, is based on ammonium nitrate, a fertilizer. It's illegal to have that fertilizer in Afghanistan, so there's clearly a smuggling network that is bringing in huge quantities of these. One of the IEDs that went off under one of our MRAPs and blew it in half was 1,500 pounds of this ammonium nitrate. And what they do is, basically, use as a triggering device

mines that are left over from the Soviet era. So, there's a lot of stuff left over from a period when, frankly, some of us were involved in shipping a lot of arms into Afghanistan.

Senator ISAKSON. Thank you for that answer.

Secretary Gates, you and Secretary Clinton both. Secretary Clinton, I have your statement here about Afghanistan and Pakistan, you said, "We'll develop a long-term sustainable relationship with Afghanistan and Pakistan so that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past." And I think, in your testimony, you refer to the mistakes of the past. Is that in the context of inconsistent engagement with Pakistan? Is that the mistake you were referring to?

Secretary GATES. I think that the—it was really turning our backs on both Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Pakistanis—and it goes to a question that was asked earlier. I mean, the truth is, there is a great deal of mistrust on the part of the Pakistanis toward us. They believe we have abandoned them, or betrayed them, on several different occasions, only the most recent of which was in the late 1980s and early 1990s. And so, we have a lot of work to do in trying to convince them that we're not trying to take over their country, that we're not trying to take control of their nuclear weapons, and that we are actually interested in a long-term partnership with them. But, it is because—and I was Deputy National Security Advisor and then DCI at the time—you know, we were dealing with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the liberation of eastern Europe. I mean, it wasn't where we were twiddling our fingers—twiddling our thumbs at the time, but the fact remains, the United States turned its back on Afghanistan.

And the irony is—and I was talking to the House Foreign Affairs Committee about this yesterday—the irony is that Charlie Wilson, over there, who was so successful in getting money for CIA and—to give to the mujahideen, the weapons to beat the Soviets, after the Soviets left, tried to get money for the civil side on Afghanistan, and, where he was able to get hundreds of millions for the weapons, couldn't get very small amounts to try and build schools and so on. So, that was the mistake, in both countries.

Senator ISAKSON. Thank you very much. Thank you again for your service to the country and your patience with the committee today.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Senator.

Senator Cardin.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to echo my sincere appreciation to all three of you for your service to our country. I have the greatest confidence in your abilities and your commitment, and I thank you for that. I know you're doing your best and that you're working together as a team.

Secretary Gates, you pointed out that this is part of a coordinated strategy to deal with the epicenter of terrorism, which is in the Afghan-Pakistan border areas. I want to raise one other issue. You talked about external forces that are supporting the terrorist organizations and the recruitment strategies. Well, one of the strategies I thought the administration was pursuing was the closing of Guantanamo Bay, not only because it wasn't effective in what we are trying to accomplish, but also that it was a recruitment symbol

for terrorist organizations. We've fallen behind on that. Can you just comment briefly on whether we are still committed and how important that is as part of our strategies on dealing with terrorists?

Secretary GATES. We very much are committed to closing Guantanamo. We have very detailed plans on how to do that. We are, I think, in the final stages of selecting a facility, and we are, at the same time, in the process of identifying detainees that we believe can be transferred to other countries. I think there are about 215 detainees left; we've identified, I think, 116, at this point, that we think can be transferred.

The President has every intention of doing this, and we will do it. The logistics—the—principally, the logistics of it have proved more complicated than—

Senator CARDIN. How important is this—

Secretary GATES [continuing]. We anticipated, but I think we're about there.

Senator CARDIN. How important is this in regards to our strategies against terrorism?

Secretary GATES. Well, one of the reasons why I articulated the opinion that we should close Guantanamo not long after I got this job, in—at the end of 2006, is because I—you know, the irony is, Guantanamo is probably the best prison in the world today—elliptical trainers, reading rooms, flat-screen TVs—and probably the most highly disciplined guard force in the world. But, it has a legacy. And what I said 3 years ago is, it bears a taint, and it is a recruiting tool for al-Qaeda and for other terrorists and Islamic extremists. So, I think that there is unanimity in the administration that we need to get this done, and, as soon as we can finalize the logistics, I think you'll see pretty quick progress after that.

Senator CARDIN. Well, let me say from the outset that I am unconvinced on the need for the additional troops. I have concerns about committing more Americans to this effort.

First, let me get the number. The President has authorized 30,000, but, as I understand it, that number could be more than 30,000 when you talk about the backup support troops.

Secretary GATES. During our discussions, one of the things that has—that I've tried to make clear consistently is that when you're looking ahead, it is impossible to foresee every need. And where I do not—where I have asked the President for some flexibility is in medics, in intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, in counter-IED capabilities—in short—road clearance, engineers—those things associated with safeguarding the lives of our troops. And I have asked him for a modest amount of flexibility on that. And it's in the range of about 10 percent of the 30,000. My hope is that I won't need to use much, if any, of it, but trying to look ahead a year or more, I felt that having some flexibility was important, particularly in terms of safeguarding our troops.

Senator CARDIN. I understand that. So, we are really looking at, potentially, 33,000 additional troops.

Secretary GATES. Potentially.

Senator CARDIN. OK. Just so we get the number right.

Now, with adding more troops, we raise the stakes. I want to talk about the benchmarks. You say the circumstances on the

ground will dictate the withdrawal, the standdown of troops in July 2011. We have benchmarks that are currently being developed for Afghanistan. I would like to hear more specifics as to what would be the circumstances on the ground that would affect your recommendation on troop levels starting in July. Are we talking about the performance of the Afghan Government? Is that part of what we're looking at, with how they control the security of their country? Are we looking at the number of military that they have ready to stand up? Are we looking at the cooperation we've received from the international community as part of this? Are we looking at the activities of the Taliban, and specifically how much of the nation they control, or how many al-Qaeda are actually in Afghanistan? What—and I hope you can be specific—what are we looking for as far as the circumstances on the ground, so that Congress can at least carry out our responsibility in evaluating this request? Do we know what we're looking at 18 months from now, what expectations we can expect? And can you be specific on this? Any one of you.

Admiral MULLEN. Two of the highest-risk areas from my perspective with respect to this strategy. One is Karzai and his government. And I mean that down to the subdistrict level, not just in Kabul. And the other is the development of the Afghan security forces. And we've set annual targets, year-to-year targets for that development, some of the reasons that have already been discussed here.

But, with respect to the Karzai government, specifics: good ministers; good governors; anticorruption; local governance; is the money actually going to the people; are goods and services getting to the people in the villages; reintegration; reconciliation. ANSF, the annual targets that I talked about specifically, we've got to reduce the attrition rate, increase the retention rate, specifically; and then, they will transition to more security forces in the lead. Corruption, in particular, in the police—on the police side, which has been mentioned. International support. We expect offers. We need to see those and actually what they're doing on the ground, not just military, but civilian, as well. There are noncontributing nations—Japan being one, recently contributing—agreed to contribute up to—or, \$5 billion to Afghanistan.

Pakistan, shifting their strategic calculus. Do we see that happening? Because we've got to work with them to get at these safe havens for al-Qaeda.

So, those are some of the—at the major level—

Senator CARDIN. Well, I would hope we could be more specific.

Let me just challenge you on one criteria—the corruption of the Karzai government, which has been well documented. Does our strategy mean that if progress is not made, we reduce our troop levels quicker; or if progress is made, we keep more troops there? How does that translate to U.S. troops being in theater? Is it a positive sign for removing troops or a negative sign? Corruption.

Secretary CLINTON. Senator, what we're looking for is capacity and effectiveness. We believe that corruption is one of the reasons why the Karzai government has not developed the capacity it needs, nor has it been effective enough.

I mean, I don't want anybody to think that we're trying to aim toward some zero-corruption standard in Afghanistan. I mean, that doesn't exist anywhere in the world, and particularly in that part of the world. But, what we do expect to see is a government that delivers more for the people, thereby obtaining the allegiance of more people in more parts of the country, that can support the effective ministers and the effective governors, especially where we need them. We each have experiences with different ministries that we think are quite competent and very professional—you know, the Defense Ministry, the Interior Ministry—increasingly, the Finance and the Education and the Agriculture Ministry.

You know, I didn't have time to respond to Senator Menendez at the length and with the thoroughness that his long litany deserves, but this is not all a negative picture. And I think it's unfair—it's unfair to our efforts, it's unfair to the efforts of many people inside the Afghanistan Government who are truly making a positive difference in the performance that we would expect from a functioning government. We have to do a better job, in the international side, to coordinate our aid, to get more accountability for what we spend in Afghanistan. But, much of the corruption is fueled by the money that has poured into that country over the last 8 years, and it is corruption at every step along the way, not just in the palace, in Kabul. You know, when we are so dependent upon long supply lines, as we are in Afghanistan, where everything has to be imported, it's much more difficult than it was in Iraq, where we had Kuwait as a staging ground to go into Iraq. You offload a ship in Karachi, and by the time whatever it is—you know, muffins for our soldiers' breakfasts or anti-IED equipment—gets to where we're headed, it goes through a lot of hands. And one of the major sources of funding for the Taliban is the protection money. That has nothing to do with President Karzai.

So, I think we need a—we owe you a more careful unpacking of a lot of the concerns, and we will endeavor to provide that.

Senator CARDIN. I appreciate it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator.

Senator Webb.

Senator WEBB. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I'd like to welcome all three of you again after our brief exchange yesterday. It's been interesting to hear how different committees approach the same situation. Welcome to the Foreign Relations Committee.

I would like to say, first of all, that I think we have pretty broad agreement about the concerns that we are facing in Afghanistan. I mean, even among members who have been pretty vocal here today, the question really is to continue to examine the process that we are proposing in order to address those questions. And I think there have been some really excellent points made today by Senator Feingold, who talked about a concern that I've had for a number of years here, that we are losing our maneuverability. We did it in Iraq. We are in danger of, to a certain extent, losing it in Afghanistan as we face a threat to this country that has a high degree of mobility. And Senator Corker, I think, has made some really valid points. And you've heard, again and again, this ques-

tion about timeline versus concept. And I'm going to mention something on that again.

But, before I do, I want to just—Secretary Gates, I want to give you my view on something that you said, just to clarify my view for the record, when you said that, in your view, a lot of Afghans don't want us to leave, and that being one of the motivations behind putting some sort of a date on the beginning of the leaving process, I would say perhaps that's more true among people who are in the government than it is Afghans, writ large. I would comment, there's an Asia Foundation survey, this year, which shows that 56 percent of those surveyed were sympathetic to antigovernment groups that used violence against us. And this is a country, as I mentioned yesterday, that has a long history of opposing any sort of foreign occupation. So, that's the other side of this.

And I think there's some legitimacy in the concern that Senator Boxer mentioned, with level of violence that might be engendered by military presence in areas where there's a perception of occupation. And we discussed that yesterday. I won't go in it again today.

But, I'd just like to lay out three basic thoughts here. One is, if we're talking about a stable, supportive Afghanistan, which is something that came up in testimony, it's very difficult—particularly if we're talking about being there long term, as, Secretary Clinton, you've mentioned—it's very difficult to do that without a stable, viable government of some sort. And I'm curious—and I've mentioned this a number of times before—about the process through which this government was formed. The constitution that formed this government, as a result of the Bonn Agreements, which, on paper, created a centralized system and there might be an adjustment needed, constitutionally or otherwise, that devolves some sort of power if, realistically, we're going to look at a stability in the provinces and above.

And the second is, you can't grow a national army of 400,000, including national police, without people who are willing to support that concept. And we're having a very difficult time in growing that. And I've not heard anything from the President, through yesterday to today—and, Admiral Mullen, I'd like your thoughts on this—with respect to where we are, in terms of meeting the goals that we announced, in terms of growing that national army.

And then, third, you can't really talk about this timeline. This is probably one of the greatest difficulties of the way that this has been presented. It's very difficult to talk about a timeline for withdrawal without clearly laying out, in an affirmative way, what the conditions on the ground will be that will enable this process to begin. And we haven't really heard in these exchanges, from yesterday and today. What is this going to look like—not necessarily specifically, province by province, but what is this environment going to look like when this turnover can occur?

So, those are the three questions that I would have. And, Secretary Clinton, I'd very much like to hear your views on the nature of this government and how we can operate there long term without addressing some way to perhaps change the constitution.

Secretary CLINTON. Well, Senator, I'll take No. 1; I think that maybe Admiral Mullen can take No. 2, and Secretary Gates can, you know, be our cleanup hitter.

I think you raise a very profoundly important question, and it's something that I began discussing with President Karzai during my last visit. There has to be the decentralization of the—of government functions and authority that reflects the way the country actually operates. I think this has to be undertaken in a very clear process headed by—motivated by the interests of the Afghans themselves.

I think the Bonn constitution, which was a credible effort, you know, made a number of assumptions that were at variance with both the past and the current reality within Afghanistan.

So, this is a—this does seem to be a conversation that President Karzai is willing to engage in. There are certain redlines for him, as there would be for any President of a sovereign country. But, he was very open to it. Looking for ways to bring in some of the traditional decisionmaking processes, like the *loya jirga*, and make it a part of an ongoing governmental authority—there's a lot there that we should be looking at. And so, I think your suggestion is one that we will be talking to him further about.

And just, finally, I think, too, that the way that the government currently functions is something that could not necessarily have been predicted 8 years ago at Bonn, but—

Senator WEBB. I would strongly agree with you on that, by the way. I think, in the context of 2001, it was an accomplishment to have achieved this constitution.

Secretary CLINTON. That's right. And so, now I think it is time to take stock, and there are many different ideas being discussed, and what we need is to make this an Afghan process—I just want to reiterate and close with this—the last thing in the world we want is a bunch of international experts flying in to Kabul to tell the government and the people of Afghanistan, “Here's how you must, you know, construct your government.” But, let's work together to get the lessons that have been learned, and then try to translate that.

Senator WEBB. The challenge would be for Karzai to understand that, in the long run, that would be in his self-interest, I would say.

Secretary CLINTON. Well, not only that, it would be in the interest of his legacy.

Senator WEBB. And it's in the interest of the Afghan people. Yes.

Secretary CLINTON. You know, one of the—one of—I mean, one of the things that President Karzai has said to me is that, you know, his family—his family has fought for Afghanistan for 300 years. I mean, he carries that sense of patriotism very close to his heart. Now, we may have different views about how he sees his role and how he's conducted it, but I think it is a serious mistake not to put yourself into the shoes of the other person and to actually listen and understand how they see the reality they inhabit. And so, that's, you know, part of what we're trying to get better than it's been over the last several years.

Senator WEBB. Thank you.

Admiral MULLEN. ANSF, just quickly, Senator Webb, we're at about—on the army side, about 96,000 right now. That said, we're sort of in the 55,000 to 60,000 that actually are out there in the field. So, we've got to work on the overhead aspect of this.

One of the real fundamental changes that McChrystal's put in place is the partnership piece. So, I mean, we have company, platoon, squad-sized units out, you know—

Senator WEBB. In terms of growing the size of the Afghan—

Admiral MULLEN. I think that's a—

Senator WEBB [continuing]. National—

Admiral MULLEN [continuing]. That's a—

Senator WEBB [continuing]. Military, where are we from where the goals would have been at this point? Are you on target, in terms of growing the actual size of the—

Admiral MULLEN. Well, I think that—

Senator WEBB [continuing]. National army?

Admiral MULLEN. I mean, the targets just recently, you know, got reset by McChrystal, so we're 96,000 in the army right now, we need to be at 134 about 12 months from now, by next—

Senator WEBB. Right.

Admiral MULLEN [continuing]. September, roughly. And that kind of increase each year, to build to whatever the eventual outcome is, aspirationally, notionally, 400,000 between both the army and the police, specifically. But, our—we've got to reduce the retention—or, we've got to increase retention significantly, reduce the attrition, and increase recruiting.

One of the things is just incentives. I mean, the Taliban make a lot more money than the national security forces right now. So, General McChrystal is, as we speak, increasing the pay fairly significantly for the security forces, which we think will have an impact.

So, we think we understand what the specifics are, what we need to do, and—but, it's really about, now, executing that, and we don't underestimate, particularly on the police side, the significance of the challenge and the risks that are associated with that.

In the end, they're the ones that are going to provide the local security, they're the ones that are going to be able to "hold" and on which to "build" in the long run, and we know that.

Senator WEBB. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me just say that—we're going to run up against a timeframe here—there's going to be a vote, I think, somewhere in the next 10 or 15 minutes—

Senator WEBB. All right, well, let me just—in terms of the third question, it's been discussed a good bit, so I will just leave it as an observation so we can move the hearing on and—thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Senator.

And, in addition to that, Secretary Gates, I know, has to leave at noon, sharp. And Secretary Clinton needs to leave for Brussels. So, we do want to try to wrap it up, if we can.

Admiral MULLEN. I'd be—

The CHAIRMAN. I know that we need—

Admiral MULLEN. Chairman, I'd be glad—

The CHAIRMAN. I'd prefer to have a second round—

Admiral MULLEN [continuing]. I'd be glad to stay. I'm kidding. [Laughter.]

I'm going with my boss. [Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. We would love to have had a second round, but this will be an ongoing conversation. I think we'll have some chances—maybe even get the committee together for a good conversation rather than just a hearing. And, I think if you're willing to do that, I think it would be very helpful, at some point in time.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to begin by thanking each of you—

The CHAIRMAN. And I can't tell you—I don't know why we have a hurricane above us here today. I apologize for—

Secretary GATES. We thought it was a Senate bowling alley.
[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. That would be news to me, I don't know.

Senator SHAHEEN. I want to applaud each of you and the President and everybody who's been involved in the very thorough review of what our strategy should be in Afghanistan.

New Hampshire is, this week, sending another 140 National Guard members over to Afghanistan. And, as you pointed out, Secretary Clinton, these are mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, and we owe them, and all of the men and women serving there, a mission that they can understand and support. And I think it's appropriate, also, that we continue to have a rigorous debate in Congress and in the Senate about what we're going to do. So, thank you all for that.

There have been a number of mentions about the importance and the potential for reconciling certain Taliban elements, and the importance of that to the success of what happens in Afghanistan. Have any of those overtures begun? And who do we see is going to do those kinds of negotiations? How do we envision that happening?

Secretary GATES. First of all, we have tried to, in our discussions, differentiate between reconciliation and reintegration. It may seem like a semantic point, but we consider reconciliation to be, What opportunities are there with Taliban leaders to bring them over and along with the people who are fighting for them?

I think the general view is that, until the momentum shifts against the Taliban, the likelihood of significant reconciliation, in those terms, is not very bright. So, that's part of changing the momentum, is beginning to get these guys to think differently about the future.

With respect to reintegration, this is really about getting the foot soldiers to decide that they don't want to be a part of the Taliban anymore. And we have some very limited anecdotal information about people deciding they didn't want to fight for the Taliban anymore, and going back to their villages. The key here—and we think that there is some significant percentage of these foot soldiers who actually are doing this for pay or who have been intimidated into doing it. So, if we can provide economic opportunities, or the international organizations, or whoever, or our efforts on agriculture can create more opportunities for them to earn a salary—but, the security piece is absolutely central, because there are also too many stories of people who have wanted to quit the Taliban who not only, themselves, have been killed, but all of their family have been killed. And so, the security environment in a village or in a district

has to be such that these people who want to put down their guns and pick up a plow can do so without the fear that they and their entire families will be massacred.

And again, this is a matter of establishing the security, but it's also a sense of—Secretary Clinton referred, earlier, to more of a hedging on the part of the Afghans because of their uncertainty of who's going to win, because the winners—if the winners are the other side, and they've picked our side, they will be killed. And so, they are waiting to see where the momentum is shifting. And, frankly, it's this shift of momentum that we think is important and that is a fundamental purpose behind this surge of troops to push that Taliban back and to create an environment in which these people, as they look at this situation to decide which way they want to go, go our way, go the way of the Afghan Government.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Secretary Clinton, I know you're on your way to a NATO meeting, and I had the opportunity, a couple of weeks ago with Secretary Gates, to be part of the first of a forum on global security with a number of our NATO allies, and was on a panel with the German Defense Minister, and was impressed with his willingness to look at Germany's role in their NATO mission, and just wondered what message you're going to take to our NATO allies to encourage them to talk to their publics about the importance of the mission in Afghanistan.

Secretary CLINTON. Well, Senator, we have been reaching out vigorously to our counterparts. Certainly, the President has spoken with a number of heads of state, the Vice President, Secretary Gates, myself, National Security Advisor Jones. And we've gotten a very encouraging response.

Secretary General Rasmussen, at NATO, has been very positive about the President's decision, and has carried that message to capitals across Europe. And I think that, as the weeks ahead unfold, there will be significant announcements of additional troops. Our hope is that the aggregate of the troop announcements will be between 5,000 and 7,000. That would give us a lot more leeway in many of the parts of the country that we want to continue to make sure are secure. It would help with the performance of certain functions, as well as the important role of training the police and the army.

So, we are encouraged. There will also be an international meeting, at the request of Prime Minister Brown and Chancellor Merkel at the end of January, which is a very important event for a lot of our NATO ISAF allies. So, I think that, you know, we will see, in real terms, the delivery on the rhetorical support that the President's decision has engendered.

Senator SHAHEEN. And will your discussions also include better coordination of the different NATO forces who are in Afghanistan?

Secretary CLINTON. Well, that certainly is a conversation that we are in the midst of. I held a meeting, when I was in Kabul, with about a dozen of the NATO ISAF Foreign Ministers who were there for the inauguration, and one of the points that I stressed is how we have to do a better coordinating our civilian aid, how we would like to see a civilian counterpart to General McChrystal, who is the commander of the NATO ISAF forces. Not all the ISAF members,

as you know, are in NATO, so trying to structure this the right way is challenging, but there's a great and growing understanding of why we need to do a better job with all of the partners, NATO ISAF, the United Nations. Obviously, the United States believes that we have to play a major role in this because of the burdens that we have assumed, but we want the international support, as well.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. And I'm out of time, but I just wanted to urge followup on what we heard from Senators Webb and Cardin, that the measures of how we're going to determine our success over the next 18 to 24 months, I think, will be very important to make sure that we understand, and that the public understands, what we're looking at that shows us that we're being successful.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Casey.

Senator CASEY. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

And I want to thank Secretary Gates, Secretary Clinton, and Admiral Mullen for at least two things—your public service at this time in our Nation's history, as well as the review, that you just conducted along with the President, which was both thorough and essential, contrary to some of the commentary around Washington.

I wanted to return to a topic that I know some have explored to some degree already, and that's President Karzai and his government. We know that on a number of occasions—in order to get this right—and we have to get it right; I can't imagine a more serious, grave situation we've faced in recent American history—you have to get the security right, the governance part of this right, as well as other issues, like development. And to get governance right, President Karzai has to be a full partner in this.

I was in Afghanistan and Pakistan in August, and I know that being on the ground for a few days doesn't confer omniscience on any Senator, but I have to say that, meeting with President Karzai in August 2009 and May 2008, I came away very troubled by his answers to questions I and others have posed to him, and stunned by some of the things he said or did not say in those meetings. So, I keep returning to this question, among others, when we analyze our strategy.

So, I wanted to get a sense of, in a very specific way—I know, Secretary Clinton, in your testimony, you rightly and appropriately said the Afghan people, the United States, and the international community will hold the Afghan Government accountable for making good on its commitments and President Karzai's recent pledges—of what, specifically, will we do to hold him accountable, both him personally, but also his government? I know you understand the importance of this.

Secretary CLINTON. Well, there are a number of steps. You know, we have been working closely with the Afghan Government in support of a major crimes tribunal. We have enhanced our cooperation between law enforcement and intelligence—FBI, DEA, Department of Justice—in order to clearly and unequivocally present evidence of corruption that we expect action to be taken on with respect to charging and prosecuting and removing from office and seeking restitution from those against whom a case can be made. We are

also working to certify ministries as to which will or will not receive the money from the United States. And we want that to be part of our overall coordination, to go back to Senator Shaheen's question, so that we can have an international—an internationally accepted standard for transparency and accountability in these governments. We are working closely and encouraging the right decisions, in our view, to be made about members of the new Cabinet, governors to be appointed, and the like.

So, there's an intense ongoing consultation. I would think that probably Ambassador Eikenberry and other members of his leadership team spend many hours every day in direct consultation and conversation with, not only President Karzai, but others in positions of responsibility.

So, I mean, we're moving on all of these fronts, Senator Casey, and it's—it's not easy, and we think that our intentions are clear, and we expect to see progress made. But, again, I don't want to paint some Utopia that we are attempting to achieve; that's just not in the cards. It's not in the cards anywhere.

And the United States has been deeply involved in other countries, going back 60 years, often with combat troops on the ground, where there was massive corruption, where there was instability, where there were fraudulent elections. And, you know, you just—you know, you have to have a certain level of strategic patience here in order to see things through. And I think that, you know, President Karzai and his government have been under more scrutiny than probably most ever have been. I mean, we do a lot of business with a lot of countries that have elections where the leader is reelected at 98 or 99 percent, and we don't say a word, we just keep going. Now, the difference is, we have our young men and women, military and civilian, in a combat situation, and we have to expect more.

But, we need to put it in the broader context of, you know, what we have done around the world for decades, and, you know, the kind of efforts that prove successful and in keeping with the national security needs of the United States.

Senator CASEY. Well, I want to commend the work that you, Ambassador Eikenberry, and others have done. I know it's not easy and that there are limitations of what we can do when dealing with a sovereign government. But, I know how important it is.

I wanted to raise another issue, and ask whether Secretary Gates and Admiral Mullen want to add to anything that we've explored already. But, the second element of this decision, in terms of getting it right is governance. What do we do with, or can we have a positive impact on, local and provincial leaders? One thing that was heartening to me, as disappointed as I was at some of President Karzai's answers, was that the two ministers that we met with, Minister Wardak as well as Atmar, with army and police responsibilities, obviously, were said to be, and, I think, in the limited time we had with them, gave evidence that they're very competent and they've got a lot of skills.

We also met some capable local and provincial leaders. So, what's the strategy with regard to engaging local or provincial leaders? And how does that factor into getting this governance piece right?

Secretary GATES. From the time I—actually, from my confirmation hearings, I’ve been concerned that, among other things, we were too focused on the central government in Afghanistan, and particularly the notion of trying to build a strong central government in a country that had never had one, and that we weren’t paying enough attention to the local and tribal leaders and the traditional institutions in Afghanistan. The—one of the tragedies of 30 years of war is that many of those local institutions—the tribal shuras and so on—had been significantly weakened as elders have been shot or executed or—and their authority undermined, and the Taliban goes after them specifically. And so, I think a really important part of the President’s decisions and our discussions was, How are we going to engage, at the subnational level, at the provincial level, at the district level, and at the local and village level? And it’s everything from the President’s talk to Secretary Clinton and myself about communications—how do we communicate with those people, convey to them what we and the Afghan Government are trying to do? And so, and how do we work with them? And the truth of the matter is—and we’ll get into it further with you all down the road—but, in terms of the transfer of security responsibility, in a lot of these districts and areas, it may not be the Afghan National Army or the Afghan National Police that we—that—to whom we turn for providing local security; it may well be a local security force that operates within the context of the provincial government or the district government. We’ve seen some experiments with this in Wardak province and elsewhere, and they’ve worked pretty well. And so, I think it’s going to be a mix.

And, to answer the question that Senator Webb asked, my view is, we will do the transfer of security in the same way we did it in Iraq, and that will be a judgment by the ISAF commanders of when an area is ready, when the local forces are ready, to assume that responsibility with us in a tactical, and then a strategic overwatch, sort of a cavalry over the hill, if you will. And I think that—but, local security forces and local governance are going to be a big part of that—a big part of that equation.

The caution that we have is not to cross the line into reestablishing warlords and local militias that, in fact, are operating independent of the government, whether at the district or provincial or national level.

Senator CASEY. I know I’m out of time, but—

The CHAIRMAN. Senator—yes.

Senator Kaufman, we’re in the back 7 minutes of the vote, and there’s a grace period, as you know. Senator Cardin’s going to come back, so we can, hopefully, you know, get the two last Senators in, here. But, if you want to truncate a little bit, it’s your choice. We won’t—

Senator KAUFMAN. I will try.

The CHAIRMAN [continuing]. Require it.

Senator Kaufman.

Senator KAUFMAN. I will do that.

And it—look, I want to thank you very much for wrestling, which I find to be—agree with several statements that were made—one of the most complex problems I’ve ever seen, and the most difficult problem, because it involves lives of the folks that are just the best

among us. And I also want to thank you for the infinite patience to wrestle with us on this issue, and the ability to do that. And I can't think of three people who would be better, that I'd be happier, to see wrestling with this problem than the three of you.

Now, I want to agree with what Senator Casey and a lot of other people have said. I think the No. 1 problem here—there's a lot of problems, so—you know, I don't minimize any—but, the No. 1 problem is, Do we have a partner, in the Afghan Government, for success? That, to me, is the really key question. I spend time—two trips to Afghanistan, met with folks and talked to them. There's a lot of other problems. But, that's the No. 1 problem, in my mind. And one of the great things, I think, about the President's proposal is, he came up with a way, which I thought no one could, to kind of give me some hope that we can do something with the present government, and that is setting the deadline of July 2011. Because people came in and talked to me, and I've talked to so many people on this, and they all say, "Well, we should use our leverage on Karzai." I don't think we had any leverage in Karzai until you set a date certain that we're going to leave.

So, I think it's very—and kind of in a cleanup position at the end of this thing—I think it's really important—there's been a lot of confusion back and forth on the deadline, so I just want to make it clear, to send a message to the Afghan Government. You have no doubt that the President has a deadline of transferring troops out of Afghanistan in July 2011. Is that fair to say? Is it fair to say, therefore, to deal with so many other problems we have—and comparisons have been here—there is no—you have no doubt that we will not be adding more troops to Afghanistan after this deployment, outside of the 3,000, potentially, that you may have to add?

Secretary GATES. That is the commitment that we have made to the President.

Senator KAUFMAN. That's right. So, when—this is not like what we—comparisons to Vietnam, where we had promises and then didn't—this is not even like Iraq. This is a firm commitment by the President of the United States, agreed by the major foreign policy strategic planners in our government, that in July 2011 we're going to start drawing down troops, and we're not going to be adding more troops. I think that's a significant message, and I think it's the only message. If we stick to that message—it's the only message that can have—help—that the Karzai government can, in fact, be successful.

And because of the lack of time, I will yield to the Senator from New York for questions.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Before you begin, Senator, if I could just—I want to thank you, because I've got to take off and vote. And I'll hold the vote open, get them to protect you, here. But, I really appreciate your coming in. I know it takes a lot of time, but it does, as you know full well—and, Secretary, you know perhaps even more—sort of, helps the process to work, and, in the end, is critical to our own deliberative process. So, we thank you very, very much for doing that. And I wish you well on your journey.

Senator Gillibrand.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, to each of you, for being here. You've provided such extraordinary leadership for our country, and we're extremely grateful.

I agree with my colleague, this is the most difficult issue any of us can face.

I'd like you just to touch, briefly, if you can, on the issue of al-Qaeda. Secretary Gates and I, last time we spoke, talked about, Why do you care if al-Qaeda has a foothold in Afghanistan? He provided very detailed analysis about why that type of foothold would be able to be a launching ground for similar terrorist attacks to 9/11, and also the overwhelmingly destabilizing effect with regard to Pakistan, which obviously has nuclear weapons; it could pose grave security risks to the United States.

My concern is, What's to stop al-Qaeda from moving to Somalia or Yemen or any other place? And, you know, to the extent you can talk about this on a nonsecured basis, what are some of the things that you intend to do, militarily and in other operations, with regard to other places al-Qaeda will create potential strongholds?

Secretary GATES. Well, very briefly, as I said in my opening statement, al—the Afghan-Pakistan border area is the epicenter; it is the historic—it is the site of the historic victory over the Soviet Union by many of these same actors. And it is where the planning and the inspiration—certainly the inspiration, much of the training, much of the planning for al-Qaeda operations emanates from. And wherever people have been, whether it's Somalia or Yemen or the United States or the United Kingdom, almost always, the roots trace back to this border area. It is the home base, if you will, of this operation.

And it's interesting, as I said earlier, how other terrorist groups, including al-Qaeda of the Maghreb, al-Qaeda of the Arabian Peninsula, gravitate and look to that area for leadership and inspiration and legitimacy of their efforts in the context of terrorist aspirations.

And all I can tell you is that we are very aggressive in going after al-Qaeda, and we have the authority of the President to hunt them down wherever in the world we find them.

Secretary CLINTON. I would just add, Senator, that al-Qaeda has very deep roots now in this border area. You know, they have operated, in the case of bin Laden, Zawahiri, and others, in and around this area, going back 20 years—well, 30 years. They have a degree of protection from both the Afghan side and the Pakistan side. If you read the long articles that David Rohde wrote when he escaped, there is a governmental presence, in effect, in the ungoverned areas of Pakistan that gives them every reason to believe they're secure. And they're—and they—and it's not just one or more people picking up. They have extended families, they have networks of connections that would have to be disrupted.

So, I don't see that it would be very attractive or easy for them to leave where they are, and I'm not sure there is any terrain anywhere in the world that is more hospitable to them. So, for all those reasons, I think that's where you will find them.

Secretary GATES. Maybe most significantly, we would love to see them leave there.

Admiral MULLEN. The only thing I'd add to that is—and it goes to Secretary Gates' comment about having been seen to defeat the Soviet Union, and this would be seen to defeat the only remaining superpower. And that is an inspiration for recruiting, it is an acceleration for their global extremist capabilities, and it is what, in the long run, I worry the most about, if they are seen to be able to do that. Even as they are more diminished, which they have been over the last few years, but they are very, very deadly, and they seek the same kind of aim.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Well, thank you again for your testimony and your time. We're extremely grateful for your extraordinary leadership.

Thank you.

Senator CARDIN [presiding]. As I'm sure Secretary Clinton is aware, we've had a vote going on, on the floor of the Senate, so there's been a little bit of shuffling back and forth. But, I do want to thank Secretary Clinton and Secretary Gates and Admiral Mullen, on behalf of our chairman, for your patience here today, and particularly for your service to our country.

And, with that, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:00 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. CHRISTOPHER J. DODD,
U.S. SENATOR FROM CONNECTICUT

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this hearing. Secretaries Clinton and Gates, and Admiral Mullen, thank you all for your tremendous service to this country. The President and the American people are lucky to have such able, dedicated public servants at this important moment in our history.

The decision regarding how to move forward in Afghanistan represents an incredibly difficult moment—for the President, for this panel, and for our Nation.

Every American wants our troops to succeed in Afghanistan. Every Senator is committed to the security of our Nation and the stability of the world. And this week, the President laid out a serious proposal that merits careful consideration.

Sending young Americans into battle is something none of us take lightly. All of us have been to the funerals, spoken to the families, written too many letters of condolence. The cost to our country—in blood and treasure—has been high in Afghanistan, and the gain insufficient. As the President said this week, the status quo is not sustainable.

A better way forward relies upon the development of the comprehensive, detailed, and realistic plan for Afghanistan that we have been lacking for far too long. Without it, we cannot justify the continuing loss of American lives and resources, and no amount of sacrifice will accomplish our national security goals.

For my part, I remain skeptical about sending more troops to Afghanistan. This will only be acceptable to the American people—and it will only work—if it is part of a broader strategic effort, encompassing both diplomatic and economic initiatives.

I hope that, in today's hearing, you'll help us consider some of the fundamental questions that are on the minds of many Americans.

First of all, how does this policy fit in with our broader effort to keep America safe? How does it help us achieve our national security goals in Pakistan, and in the region?

Does the plan encompass the diplomatic and economic imperatives that must accompany a shift in military strategy? In my view, a strategy for success must include narrowly defined, achievable goals like protecting key population centers, providing for targeted and limited economic development (including schools, roads, water, and agriculture), cracking down on rampant corruption, and boosting the capacity of the Afghan Government (not just at the national level, but at the local level) to meet the basic needs of the Afghan people.

Do we have allies who are ready to stand with us? We all agree that our NATO allies need to do more, and that we need to work in closer concert with them. But how do we go about working with our NATO allies so that we can agree on a plan in which each of us can share our strength, and the burden of this effort?

Do we have a reliable partner in the Karzai government? We must be able to have confidence that the regime is ready, willing, and able to work with us. The Afghan people must be able to have confidence that their government can provide basic physical and economic security.

Finally, and perhaps the question weighing heaviest on the minds of the American people, do we have a credible plan for completing this mission and bringing our troops home as soon as possible? Our effort must come to an end someday, and someday soon, because, as President Obama says, our goal was never to occupy Afghanistan. Our roadmap must have a destination, a path toward a day when the Afghan Government will be able to take basic responsibility for its own people and its own future.

We wrestle with these issues because that future is inextricably linked with our own. Although there are questions to be answered, I appreciate the President's sincere, thoughtful proposal—and I appreciate the presence of our witnesses today. The challenges we face in Afghanistan and Pakistan are many and complex. I look forward to discussing them with you all.

RESPONSES OF SECRETARY OF STATE HILLARY CLINTON TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED
FOR THE RECORD BY SENATOR RICHARD LUGAR

Question. The President's strategy in Afghanistan calls for both military and civilian activities to stabilize and rebuild the country's economy.

- With regard to the coordination of civilian and military development activities, what is the chain of command among the numerous agencies engaged in some aspect of development, and how does this structure aid or hinder coordination?

Answer. Starting from the bottom—at Provincial Reconstruction Teams and District Support Teams, civilian employees from USAID, USDA, and the State Department on their agencies work in teams with one designated as the senior civilian at each platform, responsible for coordination. They coordinate closely with the military commanders of the PRTs to ensure that the projects they are overseeing complement those that the PRT commanders are executing through programs like the Commanders' Emergency Response Program. Our civilian and military leaders at each platform seek concurrence from their counterparts before spending funds.

Senior civilians report to the senior civilian representative at the Regional Command their PRT or DST falls under. The military PRT commander at a given PRT reports to a superior at his or her respective Regional Command. This ensures that civilian-military coordination on all matters—including development—occurs at the Regional Command level.

If matters need to go higher for review or resolution, the civilians send them to the U.S. Embassy, who is responsible for all civilian assistance, and the military chain is through USFOR-A in Kabul. Ambassador Eikenberry and General McChrystal have a close working relationship and meet regularly to share views and coordinate their respective activities.

The net effect of this is that we have developed synchronized civilian-military chains of command, to ensure coordination at each level: district, provincial, regional, and national. So far, our experience has been that this has promoted coordination on development and other issues.

Question. Who is ultimately in charge of the strategy?

Answer. In theater, Ambassador Eikenberry and General McChrystal are responsible for implementing the strategy. They report to the President.

Question. How are DOD reconstruction activities integrated with those of civilian agencies?

Answer. The activities are coordinated at the district, provincial, regional and national level through the mechanism described. At the district and provincial level, the PRT Commander and civilians are part of the Integrated Command Team. They are in constant contact with one another to ensure that their activities are complementary, and do not conflict or duplicate one another. Similar structures exist at the Regional Commands. Task Force and maneuver battalion commanders, who also have the ability to carry out development activities, frequently consult with PRT commanders and their civilian counterparts in their Areas of Responsibility, which can cut across provinces and districts. In a given month, the number of

Regional Command development conferences, secure conference calls, and meetings on development can be daunting, but ensure that our civilian and military reconstruction activities are well-coordinated and supporting our objectives in Afghanistan.

Question. Does DOD fully participate in country team deliberations?

Answer. Yes. DOD is well represented at our Embassy in Kabul.

Question. What is the role of Ambassador Tony Wayne with regard to DOD activities?

Answer. Ambassador Wayne, as Coordinating Director for Development and Economic Affairs in Kabul, oversees all U.S. Government nonmilitary assistance to the Afghan nation. In this position, he supervises a wide range of Embassy sections, programs, agencies and offices in the field. He is kept abreast of DOD activities, including development activities funded through programs like CERP.

Question. DOD has increasingly taken on expanded development roles in Afghanistan.

- If U.S. military forces will begin departing the country in as soon as 18 months, who will manage the programs and sectors that DOD has been managing?
- How will a transition be accomplished?

Answer. As part of the transition and drawdown process, we will examine each program to determine which programs managed by DOD should be continued. There will be close coordination with U.S. Forces–Afghanistan to ensure continuity. We will notify the Congress as required by law or request authorities as needed based on a careful evaluation of each program.

Question. In the context of a counternarcotics strategy in Afghanistan, what are the respective roles of State/INL, USAID, and DOD?

Answer. INL, USAID, and DOD coordinate closely with the Office of the Special Representative on Afghanistan and Pakistan (S/SRAP), the State Department's Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs (SCA), Embassy Kabul, and the larger Washington interagency to oversee and execute programs in support of the U.S. Government's Counternarcotics Strategy. These efforts support progress toward an end state in which the Afghan Government, in partnership with its neighbors and the international community, can effectively fight the drug trade within its own borders and break the narcotics-insurgency link by denying drug funding to insurgents.

The new U.S. Counternarcotics Strategy for Afghanistan, now in its final stages of approval, includes objectives aiming to disrupt the nexus between narcotics and the insurgency, as well as address linkages between narcotics and official corruption. While each agency and bureau hold particular expertise and capability to execute specific counternarcotics (CN) programs, interagency working groups—with participation by DEA, DOD, ONDCP, INL, SCA/A, S/SRAP, DOJ, USAID, and other interested parties—in both Kabul and Washington meet regularly to ensure that programs and policy align with overall U.S. Government's goals in Afghanistan. Working groups meet bimonthly in Washington, DC, and monthly in Kabul.

Specifically, INL carries out programs to build the capacity of the Ministry of Counternarcotics in CN public information and messaging; enhance provincial-level capacity and commitment to CN; expand drug addiction prevention and treatment capacity; and support provincial-level supply reduction through Governor-Led Eradication and the Good Performer's Initiative. INL also engages with multilateral partners such as the U.N. Office of Drugs and Crime to consolidate regional commitment to combating the flow of Afghan opiates and to diversify the base of international support for enhanced CN, law enforcement, and rule of law cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbors.

USAID, alongside the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is working to dramatically expand support for agricultural development, which forms an important cornerstone of the new U.S. Counternarcotics Strategy for Afghanistan. USAID programs work to increase agricultural sector jobs and income through increasing farmers' access to inputs and effective extension services; regenerate agribusiness by increasing linkages between farmers, markets, credit, and trade corridors; rehabilitate watersheds and improve irrigation infrastructure. Further, in order to increase Afghans' confidence in their government, USAID works to increase capacity within the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock to deliver services and promote the private sector and farmer associations through direct budget and technical assistance.

DOD's counternarcotics mission is to support the Combatant Commander and law enforcement through information-sharing, intelligence, training and equipping, infrastructure, and emergency assistance. In December 2008, DOD approved revised

rules of engagement for USCENTCOM to give military commanders on the ground the flexibility to target narcotics production facilities and facilitators for military action if they are determined to provide support to insurgents. In addition, intelligence efforts are being closely synchronized in theater through the Interagency Operations Coordination Center and the Afghan Threat Finance Cell for counter-narcotics and threat finance operations in order to target joint drug networks and insurgency effectively.

INL, DOD, and DEA also work closely together to improve the capacity of the Counternarcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA) and the Afghan Ministry of Interior (MOI) to conduct interdiction activities, investigations, and operations in order to disrupt and dismantle drug trafficking organizations and prosecute those involved in the illicit drug trade. DEA holds the operational and mentoring lead for training the specialized vetted units of the CNPA, including the Sensitive Investigative Unit (SIU), National Interdiction Unit (NIU), and Technical Intercept Unit (TIU), and conducts joint operations with these units on counternarcotics and counterinsurgency nexus targets. In support of this effort, INL provides operational, maintenance, and life support for CNPA facilities in Kabul and Forward Operating Bases throughout the country. In addition, INL supports ongoing training, equipping, and vetting assistance for the DEA-mentored specialized units. INL contributes aviation assets to joint CNPA/DEA operational missions, which include mission planning, reconnaissance, transport, aerial escort and overwatch, in-extremis support, insertion/extraction, search and rescue, and medevac assistance using INL's 10 armed and armored (Huey-II) rotary wing assets, to interdict traffickers and target, seize and destroy processing labs, chemical and drug caches/storage. Aviation support to DEA/CNPA is also provided with INL's fixed wing and leased aircraft.

DOD assistance includes support for the MI-17 program in the CNPA Aviation Interdiction Unit (AIU), which currently has a total of 12 helicopters, with 7 in country and 5 in the United States for training. In addition, DOD provides advanced training to the NIU and support to the DEA country office and FAST (Foreign-deployed Advisory Support Teams) officers.

Finally, DOD also supports the Border Management Task Force, including tactical training, equipment, and infrastructure for the Border Police, and construction of border crossing points, to help control borders and decrease drugs leaving Afghanistan and the importation of precursor chemicals and IEDs.

Question. How are each agency's activities integrated into a coherent strategy?

Answer. The U.S. interagency is working diligently to finalize a formal U.S. Strategy on Counternarcotics in Afghanistan, which is in the final stages of approval with the Office of the Special Representative on Afghanistan and Pakistan (S/SRAP). This strategy supports the President's Afghanistan-Pakistan Strategy, the implementation of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Strategy, and is integrated with the U.S. Agriculture Assistance Strategy for Afghanistan. As part of the administration's "whole of government" approach to assisting the Afghan Government in waging its counterinsurgency, the Counternarcotics Strategy also supports the U.S. Integrated Civilian-Military Campaign Plan for Support to Afghanistan. Following final approval of the strategy, the interagency Counternarcotics Working Group will draft implementation plans for specific programmatic aspects of the strategy.

Each agency's programs support the draft provisions contained within this strategy, which has been drafted in accordance with guidance provided to the Counternarcotics Working Group by S/SRAP and the Bureau for South and Central Asian Affairs (SCA). In addition to informal verbal and written guidance provided during extensive working group and policymaking discussions, such guidance from S/SRAP and SCA also includes an internal CN action plan developed by SCA and approved by S/SRAP in May 2009. This currently serves as a template for interagency activities while transitioning to the revised counternarcotics strategy.

Question. Who is responsible for National Police training?

Answer. Afghan National Police (ANP) training is coordinated in Afghanistan by the International Police Coordination Board (IPCB). Within the United States Government, the Department of Defense is responsible for U.S. efforts on police training.

Although State initiated its own police training program in Afghanistan in 2003, in 2005 a multiagency agreement gave the Department of Defense (DOD) authority over all U.S. Government efforts to organize, train, and equip the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), which includes both the Afghan National Police (ANP) and the Afghan National Army (ANA). Congressional funding for this effort is provided exclusively through Afghan Security Forces Funding (ASFF) given to DOD. DOD transfers funds to State which INL uses to deploy U.S. civilian police trainers and

advisors to conduct training and mentoring of the ANP. DOD's representative in the field, Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan (CSTC–A), determines program requirements; the U.S. Chief of Mission provides policy guidance.

Contractual responsibility for ANP training is scheduled to transfer from INL to CSTC–A on March 31, 2010. This will serve to streamline management of ANP training so that resourcing, funding, and other management issues are more efficient. State will continue to play a role in Afghan law enforcement training through program policy, oversight, and direction of the police program through Ambassador Eikenberry, the U.S. Chief of Mission. INL and DOD are also currently assessing future requirements in advanced training and training/mentoring for gender-specific programs.

Question. How will the U.S. monitor and evaluate NATO multilateral police and army training?

Answer. Training and preparing Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) to take the lead in protecting the Afghan people and their territory is a key element of the President's strategy in Afghanistan. Building the ANSF has been and will continue to be a significant and critical task, and we have reached out to our NATO allies and other international partners to help us work with the Afghan Government to achieve this goal. The international community has responded positively to the requests made by the Afghan Government by providing trainers, equipment, and funding. In close coordination with the Afghan Government, NATO allies, and international partners we have established programs of instruction for training the army and police that ensure a uniform approach to building the ANSF. Finally, in 2009, allies agreed to establish a NATO Training Mission in Afghanistan under U.S. LTG William B. Caldwell IV, who also commands the U.S. Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan. This "dual-hat" command arrangement will help ensure that the diverse international efforts to help the ANSF are coordinated and that training provided to the army and police is effectively monitored and evaluated.

Question. Please provide the following information:

- The Afghanistan Government ministries that will receive direct U.S. financial support.
- The U.S. Government agency that will oversee that support, including which agency will be responsible for determining the readiness of each ministry to handle the proposed level of support.
- The level of funding proposed for each ministry.
- The objective that the financial support is designed to achieve.
- The entity, United States or Afghan, that will be responsible for monitoring and evaluation.

Answer. As part of our effort to support the Afghan Government's ability to deliver services for the Afghan people, USAID is reviewing the financial, management, procurement and expenditure systems of key ministries regarding their capacity to accept U.S. direct assistance. Assessments (financial and procurement) are conducted for ministries that USAID intends to fund with direct assistance. If the assessments determine the management, procurement, financial, and expenditure systems can be certified as accountable, the USAID Mission in Afghanistan certifies the ministry as having the capacity to accept direct funding. If the assessments determine additional specific technical assistance is required, USAID will provide it. As of December 2009, the Ministries of Public Health, Communications and Information Technology and Finance have been assessed and certified to directly accept U.S. Government funds. USAID is planning to conduct assessments on the Ministries of Education; Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock; and Rural Rehabilitation and Development.

For those ministries that have been certified to receive direct USAID, assistance, the breakdown of funding and objectives are below. It should be noted, however, that for those ministries with pending certification, no determination has been made regarding the exact dollar figure for direct assistance, and objectives of such assistance are still in development.

- Ministry of Public Health: \$236 million/5 years
 - Objective: Allowing the continuation of basic health services in 13 USAID-supported Afghan provinces.
- Ministry of Communication & Information Technology: \$1 million/2 years
 - Objective: Allow for the improvement of information and communication technology coverage and infrastructure throughout government institutions, as well as to increase access to information for the people of Afghanistan.
- Ministry of Finance: \$30 million/2 years

- Objective: The Civilian Technical Assistance Plan allows the GIROA to recruit, hire, and place expatriate advisors, deployed at the central and subnational levels in specific technical areas in accordance with the needs of the Afghan ministries/agencies. It is a multidonor initiative to rationalize the placement of technical assistance, ensuring that the assistance provided is demand-driven and that there is an overall picture of the number and placement of advisors.
- Furthermore, we are also contemplating direct budget funding of \$200 million per year for 5 years to be used to fund priority programs in the Afghan Government's development budget, with at least 50 percent of the funds going to specific high-priority areas in the South and East, and tied to clear benchmarks.
- Ministry of Education: certification pending
- Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development: certification pending
- Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock: certification pending

Oversight, monitoring and evaluation of this direct assistance will be handled by USAID. In the case of the Ministry of Public Health, it should be noted that a specialized grants and contracts unit within the ministry will be responsible for the coordination and administration of grant and contract awards.

USAID also contributes to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust (ARTF) Fund, a multidonor trust fund administered by the World Bank that pays a portion of the Afghan Government's operational costs, as well as funds certain national-level development projects. The operational costs covered by the ARTF include delivery of services such as health care and education, and paying the salaries of about 250,000 nonuniformed civil servants throughout the country. The National Solidarity Program (NSP) is GIROA's flagship development program which provides a mechanism for the government to deliver urgently needed services to its rural population. Through the NSP, the government develops connections to the local population and provides them with resources to build infrastructure projects, identified and implemented by the communities themselves.

The World Bank administers the ARTF program, although it is considered direct assistance to the Afghan Government. Donors contribute to a single account, held by the World Bank in the United States. The ARTF Management Committee makes decisions on proposed allocations at its monthly meeting, and those decisions are translated into funds through grant agreements signed between the World Bank and the Government of Afghanistan. The World Bank also monitors the projects.

In 2009, USAID provided \$230 million to the ARTF, and in FY 2010 we will provide \$650 million to the same account, with not less than \$175 million of that amount going toward the NSP. From FY 2003 through FY 2008, USAID provided approximately \$400 million to the ARTF.

Question. In October of this year, the Broadcasting Board of Governors briefed the committee on its operations worldwide, including our programming for the Afghanistan/Pakistan border region. The BBG noted in a followup written response that, in spite of working with the Afghan Government since the fall of 2005, "The Ministry of Information continues to block the contract for the operation of the Khost facilities . . . Minister of Information Khurram continues to block efforts to resolve this issue . . ." How has the situation changed since October?

Answer. The Department of State has worked closely with the Broadcasting Board of Governors to resolve the impasse with the Government of Afghanistan over the commissioning of the Khost transmitter site.

After many months of active engagement on this issue with Afghan officials, on December 3, 2009, the U.S. Embassy informed BBG of a possible interim solution to the impasse. Under this plan, Minister Khurram agreed in principle to a rapid startup of the Khost facility and operations for 6 months. If, during this period, BBG and the Ministry cannot come to a permanent agreement, then the Afghan Government has the right to shut down the transmitter.

BBG has advised the Embassy that it accepts the proposal, and has asked that our concurrence be transmitted to the relevant ministries so that startup of the transmitter can be expedited.

The central issue in any permanent agreement remains control over the content of Voice of America—and, presumably—RFE/RL Pashto broadcasts when they begin in mid-January 2010. The ministry apparently still wants to insert language into the bilateral agreement governing the broadcasts that would give them the right to terminate the transmission of programs deemed detrimental to the national interests of Afghanistan.

BBG has rejected that language, and proposed alternative language. BBG has pledged to begin discussions immediately, and work closely with the U.S. Embassy in Kabul to reach a final agreement in timely fashion.

RESPONSES OF DR. ROBERT GATES TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD
BY SENATOR RICHARD G. LUGAR

CIVILIAN-MILITARY COORDINATION

The President's strategy in Afghanistan calls for both military and civilian activities to stabilize and rebuild the country's economy.

Question. With regard to the coordination of civilian and military development activities, what is the chain of command among the numerous agencies engaged in some aspect of development, and how does this structure aid or hinder coordination?

Answer. The Department of Defense does not engage in "development activities" per se, but rather urgent humanitarian, reconstruction, and counterinsurgency activities that can also aid the development of Afghanistan. The newly established USG integrated civil-military decision-making chain allows for planning and coordination of activities at all levels from the district/company-level to the national/embassy-level. While new, this structure has already exhibited vast improvements in the coordination of civilian and military activities.

Within this chain, there are two primary nodes of coordination of "development activities": the Provincial Reconstruction Team where military and civilian actors develop integrated plans for executing critical projects, and at the U.S. Embassy where national-level working groups provide a forum for coordinating large projects. In addition, USAID has a seat on the national-level Commanders' Emergency Response Program (CERP) coordination board that reviews projects above a certain funding level.

This question would best be served by additionally asking our State Department counterparts.

Question. Who is ultimately in charge of the strategy?

Answer. With regards to the overall U.S. strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan the President of the United States and his Cabinet are ultimately in charge of the U.S. strategy. In Afghanistan, Ambassador Eikenberry is the lead U.S. Government official responsible for U.S. Government (USG) policy. General McChrystal is responsible for U.S. military efforts while also serving a unique role of being the international military commander. General McChrystal and Ambassador Eikenberry are responsible for coordinating USG efforts.

With regards to civilian-military coordination, in August 2009, both General McChrystal and Ambassador Eikenberry published an "Integrated Civilian-Military Campaign Plan for Support to Afghanistan" that provides guidance from the U.S. Chief of Mission and the Commander of U.S. Forces-Afghanistan to U.S. personnel in Afghanistan. The plan represents the collaborative effort of all the USG Departments and Agencies operating in Afghanistan and the range of different equities, resources, and approaches. The plan is based on close collaboration with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) as well as the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and partner nations to build effective civilian and military mechanisms for integrated assistance. But its most important component is a strong partnership with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) that will build the capacity needed to provide Afghanistan with a stable future. The ultimate goal is for the GIROA to have full responsibility for its own security and administration as the international community continues to offer economic assistance, training, and other noncombat support for the continued development of the country.

Question. How are DOD reconstruction activities integrated with those of civilian agencies?

Answer. In August 2009, both General McChrystal and Ambassador Eikenberry published an "Integrated Civilian-Military Campaign Plan for Support to Afghanistan" that provides guidance from the U.S. Chief of Mission and the Commander of U.S. Forces-Afghanistan to U.S. personnel in Afghanistan.

The newly established U.S. Government integrated civil-military decisionmaking chain allows for planning and coordination of activities at all levels from the district/company-level to the national/embassy-level. While new, this structure has already exhibited vast improvements in the coordination of civilian and military activities.

Within this chain, there are two primary nodes of coordination of “development activities”: the Provincial Reconstruction Team where military and civilian actors develop integrated plans for executing critical projects, and at the U.S. Embassy where national-level working groups provide a forum for coordinating large projects. In addition, USAID has a seat on the national-level Commanders’ Emergency Response Program (CERP) coordination board that reviews projects above a certain funding level.

Question. Does DOD fully participate in country team deliberations?

Answer. DOD participates in and contributes to virtually every aspect of Country Team deliberations. Ambassador Eikenberry and General McChrystal meet frequently to discuss issues and approve coordinated civil-military planning that addresses Afghanistan’s challenges. The Integrated Civil-Military Campaign Plan, endorsed by both Ambassador Eikenberry and General McChrystal, forms an Executive Working Group and 15 national-level working groups—each cochaired by a civilian and military representative. Several of the Embassy’s sections have detailed or embedded military members who bring valuable experience and perspective while also serving as conduits to the military organizations for informal communication. Internal Embassy products, such as cables and briefing and information memos, are provided to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), U.S. Forces–Afghanistan (USFOR–A), ISAF Joint Command (IJC), Combined Joint Task Force–435 (CJTF–435), and NATO Training Mission–Afghanistan (NTM–A)/Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan (CSTC–A) in draft form for input and comments. Finally, a military liaison office headed by a U.S. Air Force brigadier general ensures that the Embassy is well informed and connected to military planning and activities. The Ambassador relies on this general as a trusted confidant and sounding board. DOD participates in every aspect of Embassy deliberation including policy formulation, drafting of policy documents, and final decisionmaking at the Ambassador’s level.

Question. What is the role of Ambassador Tony Wayne with regard to DOD activities?

Answer. Ambassador Tony Wayne, the Coordinating Director for Development and Economic Affairs at U.S. Embassy Kabul, is responsible for overseeing economic and development activities in Afghanistan. He plays a vital role in ensuring U.S. civilian and military assistance activities are harmonized and mutually reinforcing. For example, he and his group worked to ensure governance and other civilian assistance efforts can be available to go into contested Afghan localities at an appropriate time after or with the U.S. military as part of our clear, hold, build, and transfer approach. He cochairs the Executive Working Group (EWG) with Brigadier General Frank McKenzie of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The EWG meets weekly to coordinate and direct the activities of all 15 of the national-level working groups established under the Integrated Civil-Military Campaign Plan. Ambassador Wayne plays an important role for the Embassy in overseeing the activities of the Senior Civilian Representatives in each of the Regional Commands. In addition, he ensures the efforts of the Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and other relevant civilian agencies undertaking assistance activities in Afghan development are done as a “whole of government” approach so they have the greatest possible efficiency and effect.

Question. DOD has increasingly taken on expanded development roles in Afghanistan. If U.S. military forces will begin departing the country in as soon as 18 months, who will manage the programs and sectors that DOD has been managing?

Answer. Regarding the transition start date, it is imperative to understand that July 2011 is the beginning of a process. We are increasingly looking to the Afghan Government to take on more responsibility, and we will assess conditions as we move forward. Based on the assessment of conditions on the ground, the President will determine the scope and pace of a gradual and responsible drawdown of U.S. combat forces. DOD trainers and advisors will remain in Afghanistan conducting security sector capacity-building and reform to ensure a sustainable transition.

The President’s strategy is an integrated civil-military strategy. Increased civilian resources are being established now to ensure the capability exists to sustain efforts. As Secretary Clinton described during her testimony, the Department of State will seek additional resources, including additional civilian personnel in Afghanistan, to implement the President’s strategy. The State Department, in coordination with our military commanders, is currently examining the requirements for additional personnel to complement our military force increase.

In order to coordinate these civilian activities with our military efforts, Ambassador Eikenberry and General McChrystal published the “Integrated Civilian-Mili-

tary Campaign Plan for Support to Afghanistan” in August 2009, which provides guidance from the U.S. Chief of Mission and the Commander of U.S. Forces–Afghanistan to U.S. personnel in Afghanistan.

U.S. Government senior civilian positions have been established and integrated at each level of the military chain of command to serve as counterparts to military commanders and coordinate civilian efforts. This newly established U.S. Government integrated civil-military decisionmaking capability in theater allows for planning and coordination of activities at all levels from the district/company level to the national/embassy level. Although new, this structure has already contributed to vast improvements in the coordination of civilian and military activities.

Within this chain of command, there are two primary nodes of coordination for stabilization and reconstruction activities: the Provincial Reconstruction Team where military and civilian actors develop integrated plans for executing critical projects, and at the U.S. Embassy where national level working groups provide a forum for coordinating large projects. In addition, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has a seat on the national level Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP) coordination board that reviews projects above a certain funding level.

Question. How will a transition be accomplished?

Answer. The essence of our civil-military plan is to clear, hold, build, and transfer. How the latter phase of this process is accomplished will largely be dictated by conditions on the ground and it will be done responsibly. The duration of our military presence will be limited, but our civilian commitment must continue even as our troops begin to come home.

Regarding the transition start date, it is imperative to understand that July 2011 is the beginning of a process. It is not when we rush for the exits; rather, it is when we begin the responsible drawdown of our forces and the responsible handoff of missions to our Afghan partners. There is no determination of how long this will take and there is no withdrawal date on the right-hand side of July 2011. There is also no specific guidance with respect to how many troops will be pulled out.

COUNTERNARCOTICS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Question. In the context of a counternarcotics strategy in Afghanistan, what are the respective roles of the State Department’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (State/INL), USAID, and DOD?

Answer. The U.S. Counter Narcotics (CN) Strategy for Afghanistan supports the President’s Afghanistan-Pakistan Strategy. It is integrated with the U.S. Government Agriculture Assistance Strategy for Afghanistan, which focuses on the redevelopment of the agricultural sector as an engine for job growth and higher incomes for rural families, enabling farmers to choose licit alternatives to poppy. The CN Strategy also supports the United States Government Integrated Civilian-Military Campaign Plan for Support to Afghanistan.

Although State/INL, USAID, and DOD work together as a part of the “whole of government approach” to assisting the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) in waging its counterinsurgency, general responsibilities fall within these respective areas:

1. Public Information (State/INL and DOD);
2. Alternative Development (USAID and USDA);
3. Interdiction (DEA, DOD, and State/INL); and
4. Law Enforcement/Justice Reform (DOJ and State/INL).

DOD’s main focus is on interdiction efforts to decrease narcotics trafficking and processing in Afghanistan while building Afghan capacity to disrupt and dismantle significant drug trafficking organizations. DOD supports CN operations in Afghanistan by detecting, monitoring, and supporting the interdiction, disruption or curtailment of emerging narcotics-related threats to our national security.

Question. How are each agency’s activities integrated into a coherent strategy?

Answer. The U.S. Counter Narcotics (CN) Strategy for Afghanistan supports the President’s Afghanistan-Pakistan Strategy. It is integrated with the U.S. Government Agriculture Assistance Strategy for Afghanistan, which focuses on the redevelopment of the agricultural sector as an engine for job growth and higher incomes for rural families, enabling farmers to choose licit alternatives to poppy. The CN Strategy also supports the United States Government Integrated Civilian-Military Campaign Plan for Support to Afghanistan.

The CN Strategy focuses on resources for those programs that will contribute directly to: (1) breaking the narcotics-insurgency-corruption nexus and, (2) helping to connect the people of Afghanistan to their government.

Question. Who is responsible for National Police training?

Answer. NATO Training Mission–Afghanistan (NTM–A)/Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan (CSTC–A) is the overall lead and has the responsibility for U.S. and NATO efforts to man, train, and equip the ANP. NTM–A/CSTC–A coordinates closely with the Afghanistan Ministry of Interior, U.S. Embassy, the European Police Mission, and other international bodies in this effort.

Question. How will the U.S. monitor and evaluate NATO multilateral police and army training?

Answer. The Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan (CSTC–A) commander, who is dual-hatted as the NATO Training Mission–Afghanistan commander, Lieutenant General Caldwell, is responsible for monitoring the overall quality of instruction for the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP). Lieutenant General Caldwell took command on November 21, 2009, when CSTC–A/NTM–A was recently upgraded from a 2- to 3-star headquarters, and he will continue to monitor the training, by both U.S. and international partners, of the Afghan National Security Forces.

BUDGET SUPPORT TO AFGHANISTAN MINISTRIES

Please provide the following information:

Question. The Afghanistan Government ministries that will receive direct U.S. financial support.

Answer. DOD does not provide direct U.S. financial support to any Afghan ministry. DOD provides indirect support to the Ministries of Defense and Interior through the Afghan Security Forces Fund. These appropriated funds support developing the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), including the provision of equipment, supplies, services, training, facility and infrastructure repair, renovation, and construction.

Additionally, DOD was authorized in the FY10 NDAA (sec. 1222(d)) to transfer \$50M in the Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) fund to the Department of State for the National Solidarity Program, administered by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development. We are currently discussing the appropriate path to implement this.

This question would best be served by additionally asking our State Department counterparts.

Question. The U.S. Government agency that will oversee that support, including which agency will be responsible for determining the readiness of each ministry to handle the proposed level of support.

Answer. As the Secretary of State noted in her testimony, the Department of State will be responsible for certifying ministries to receive direct budget support.

This question would best be served by additionally asking our State Department counterparts.

Question. The level of funding proposed for each ministry.

Answer. Because the State Department is responsible for this type of funding, and DOD will not be directly providing funding to any Afghanistan Government ministry, this question should be redirected to the Secretary of State.

Question. The objective that the financial support is designed to achieve.

Answer. Because the State Department is responsible for this type of funding, and DOD will not be directly providing funding to any Afghanistan Government ministry, this question should be redirected to the Secretary of State.

Question. The entity, United States or Afghan, that will be responsible for monitoring and evaluation.

Answer. Because the State Department is responsible for this type of funding, and DOD will not be directly providing funding to any Afghanistan Government ministry, this question should be redirected to the Secretary of State.

BGG OPERATIONS

Question. In October of this year, the Broadcasting Board of Governors briefed the committee on its operations worldwide, including our programming for the Afghani-

stan/Pakistan border region. The BBG noted in a followup written response that, in spite of working with the Afghan Government since the fall of 2005, “The Ministry of Information continues to block the contract for the operation of the Khost facilities . . . Minister of Information Khurram continues to block efforts to resolve this issue . . .”

- How has the situation changed since October?

Answer. This question would best be served by asking our State Department counterparts.

RESPONSE OF SECRETARY OF STATE HILLARY CLINTON TO QUESTION SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY SENATOR BARBARA BOXER

Question. Over the past 8 years, I have consistently voiced my concern about the dire situation of women in Afghanistan, and worked to secure resources to help them build better lives. I was surprised that President Obama did not mention Afghan women in his speech on Tuesday, particularly since they are so important to the future of Afghanistan.

- How does the President’s strategy take into account the needs of women?
- If President Karzai negotiates with Taliban leaders, as he has indicated he may, how will the United States help ensure that women are protected?

Answer. We remain deeply committed to promoting women and girls’ equal and active role in Afghan society. Women’s empowerment and full and equal civic participation are critical to economic stability, security, good governance and development—key pillars of our strategy in Afghanistan, which is aimed at preventing the reestablishment of an environment conducive to the return of al-Qaeda. In particular, we will work to ensure that the judiciary upholds the equal rights guaranteed to Afghan women in their own Constitution, and to extend the rule of law and strengthen Afghan civil society’s own efforts to advance women’s empowerment.

We understand and share your concern about how reintegration of former insurgents into their communities might adversely affect the rights of women. During that process, we must distinguish between irredeemable ideologues and those who were coerced to fight by economic or other exigent circumstances. We have made clear that we are willing to work with anyone who renounces al-Qaeda, lays down their arms, and respects the human rights of their fellow citizens as is enshrined in the Afghan Constitution.

RESPONSES OF DR. ROBERT GATES TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY SENATOR BARBARA BOXER

Question. I am gravely concerned about the threat posed by improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in Afghanistan, as statistics indicate that they are responsible for 70 to 80 percent of all American casualties there.

You have been instrumental in providing Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles—which are designed to survive IED attacks—to protect our service men and women. Since 2007, thousands of these armored vehicles have been delivered to or ordered to be sent to Iraq or Afghanistan because of your direct involvement.

However, in General McChrystal’s report to President Obama on the situation in Afghanistan, he indicates that abandoning important protective measures—such as the use of armored vehicles—in the near term will save lives in the longer term.

Specifically, he states that the use of armored vehicles in secure areas of the country conveys “a sense of high risk and fear to the [Afghan] population.”

General McChrystal goes on to recommend giving leaders the ability to accept “some risk” and use less protective equipment, such as armored vehicles and body armor, in order to better relate to the population.

But, he concludes that doing so “could expose military personnel and civilians to greater risk in the near term.”

- Are you comfortable with accepting this “risk” since the weapon of choice in Afghanistan is the IED, where the enemy can target U.S. forces from a distance?

Answer. I am never comfortable accepting risk when it involves the safety and lives of our troops. However, our Nation and coalition allies are committed to reducing the influence of the Taliban and developing a capable Afghan National Security Force (ANSF), which means that, unfortunately, “risk” will be involved in accomplishing our goals. There are numerous measures within the Department of Defense

(DOD) that we are taking to mitigate and reduce the “risk” of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) to our troops in Afghanistan. Finding solutions to countering IEDs and reducing the “risk” to our troops is one of my top priorities as Secretary of Defense.

The Presidents’ recent decision to deploy 30,000 additional U.S. troops to Afghanistan will be a big boost to our C-IED battle by allowing us to flow in extra specialized personnel and equipment in the near term that will provide for greater counter-IED (C-IED) capacity.

There is no single solution to countering the threat of IEDs. However, we can reduce and mitigate the IED threat with technical solutions and by attacking vulnerabilities along the entire spectrum of the IED network, and the Department of Defense (DOD) has focused many efforts along these lines. I believe that General McChrystal’s counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy is ultimately our greatest hope for reducing the risk to our troops. One of the indicators that his COIN strategy is working will be in the increasing volume of human intelligence (HUMINT) collected from the local citizens. As we continue to successfully implement General McChrystal’s COIN strategy, I anticipate that instances of citizens providing us with HUMINT will be on the rise, and have an exponential impact in combating the IED menace.

Finally, I am certain that the recent establishment of the Counter-IED Senior Integration Group (C-IED SIG), led by Dr. Carter and Lieutenant General Paxton (the Joint Staff Operations Officer), will have a positive impact in providing coherence to DOD’s C-IED efforts. They will be evaluating all current initiatives within DOD and ensuring that we galvanize the full resources of the Department and U.S. Government in combating IEDs and reducing the “risk” to our troops in harm’s way.

Question. In light of General McChrystal’s proposed strategy, how is the Department of Defense going to balance the threat of IEDs with protecting our troops?

Answer. Finding solutions to countering IEDs and more effectively protecting our troops is one of my top priorities as Secretary of Defense. As the statistics indicate, IEDs account for the greatest number of casualties and deaths among U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan.

Unfortunately, there is no single solution to countering the threat of IEDs. Reduction and mitigation of the IED threat is possible through technical solutions and attacking vulnerabilities along the entire spectrum of the IED network, and the Department of Defense (DOD) has focused many efforts along these lines. The President’s recent decision to deploy 30,000 additional U.S. troops to Afghanistan will be another boost to our C-IED battle by allowing us to flow in extra specialized personnel and equipment that will provide for greater C-IED capacity.

General McChrystal’s strategy contains the seeds for reaping the greatest potential gains in our C-IED fight. The central pillar of his strategy is protecting the population. When we reach the tipping point where the people of Afghanistan believe that we are credibly providing for their security and are there to stay, they will reject the Taliban, and provide us and our Afghan partners in the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) with the human intelligence (HUMINT) to effectively reduce the IED threat. We have already seen several instances in Helmand province where our counterinsurgency (COIN) campaign has produced positive results with local citizens identifying the location of IEDs for our Marines. As we continue to implement General McChrystal’s COIN strategy, I anticipate that instances of citizens providing us HUMINT will become the norm, and have an exponential impact in combating the IED menace.

Finally, we recently established a Counter-IED Senior Integration Group (C-IED SIG), led by Dr. Carter and Lieutenant General Paxton (the Joint Staff Operations Officer), to evaluate current initiatives within DOD in order to ensure unity of effort within the Department. Dr. Carter and Lieutenant General Paxton just returned from a visit to Afghanistan to assess the situation and look at ways to catalyze our C-IED initiatives and synchronize actions across the Department. I can assure you that we will continue to explore every available method to reduce the threat of IEDs to our troops.

RESPONSES OF ADM MICHAEL MULLEN TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD
BY SENATOR BARBARA BOXER

Question. Over the past 8 years, I have consistently voiced my concern about the dire situation of women in Afghanistan, and worked to secure resources to help them build better lives. I was surprised that President Obama did not mention

Afghan women in his speech on Tuesday, particularly since they are so important to the future of Afghanistan.

- How does the President's strategy take into account the needs of women?

Answer. The President's strategy highlights the protection of the Afghan population—all elements, including women and children. The USG recognizes the powerful role women can play in changing the environment in Afghanistan while balancing that within the cultural context. In providing security for critical population centers in Afghanistan, the U.S. military will reduce the risks faced by women and create an environment whereby development and humanitarian agencies can help Afghan women better realize their social and economic potential.

In the training of the Afghan National Security Forces, the U.S. military has ensured a focus on protecting human rights—including gender rights. In fact, women serve in the Afghan National Police force. In the development of Commanders' Emergency Response Program projects, commanders take into account the needs of Afghan women as influencers in their environment.

Question. If President Karzai negotiates with Taliban leaders, as he has indicated he may, how will the United States help ensure that women are protected?

Answer. The USG does not have a direct role in reconciliation or negotiation with Taliban leaders. However, the USG has stated to President Karzai, with the support of the wider international community, that any political settlement must respect the fundamentals of the Afghan Constitution which respects and protects the human rights of all individual, including women.

RESPONSE OF SECRETARY OF STATE HILLARY CLINTON TO QUESTION SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY SENATOR ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.

Question. Our strategy in Afghanistan requires us to have legitimate, capable, and reliable Afghan partners. However, the Karzai government is riddled with corruption. Transparency International recently described Afghanistan as the second-most corrupt nation in the world, with the public sector worsening for the second year in a row. Last month, for example, the Afghan Minister of Mines, Mohammad Adel, reportedly accepted a \$30 million bribe to award the country's largest development project to a Chinese mining firm. Given that Karzai has been reluctant to fire corrupt ministers in the past, it is unclear whether he will follow up his words with actions.

- What specific benchmarks will you use to ensure that the Karzai government is taking steps to combat corruption and promote transparency within the ministries? Is there a timeline associated with the benchmarks? What are the repercussions for not meeting the benchmarks? What steps are taken to certify that the ministries have met our benchmarks? Who is conducting the certification process?

Answer. President Obama and I, as well as many leaders from the international community, have consistently voiced our concerns to President Karzai and the Afghan Government over corruption and the absence of rule of law. President Karzai's inaugural address was particularly strong on the steps he intends to take on corruption. He reinforced this stance on December 15 on the occasion of an anticorruption conference in Kabul. But the Afghan Government must now take measurable actions to combat corruption; they have the responsibility to demonstrate to the Afghan people—and the wider international community—that they are making progress. Among other key reform/anticorruption measures, we hope to see the following specific actions taken:

- Appointment of competent, reform-minded individuals to lead critical ministries (e.g., Finance, MAIL, Health, Education, Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Defense, and Interior), and also to key provincial and district positions in the south and east.
- Concrete action by the Afghan Government against corrupt officials and known criminals (e.g., increased investigations by the Major Crimes Task Force resulting in criminal charges; public prosecutions of corrupt officials).
- Enhanced oversight of ministries, especially police (e.g., creation and strengthening of inspector general functions in core ministries; increased audits of major programs).
- Decreased evidence of political interference with Afghanistan's Chief Prosecutor and other Afghan law enforcement bodies, and more generally in anticorruption enforcement.

We will monitor these steps and we have a responsibility to ensure that the considerable foreign assistance we provide does not add to the problem and is utilized appropriately and effectively.

Fighting corruption is not easy and we should not expect results overnight. However, it is clear that some ministries fare better than others. A key element of our governance strategy is to address corruption through strengthening the capacity and capability of Afghan institutions, thus developing greater accountability and transparency. President Karzai has announced measures to reduce corruption: the simplification of administrative systems through the anticorruption commission, reducing the opportunity for corruption and improving basic services for the population; and streamlining international donor coordination through the Afghan Government. Afghanistan has recently set up a Major Crimes Task Force and plans to create a commission against corruption. Several U.S. agencies work with a range of Afghan counterparts on training and building such capacity. There is also a crucial role to be played by the Afghan people themselves—through civil society organizations, Parliament, other institutions and through media debate—to set out what they need from their government and what they will be able to give in return.

We have a system for certifying ministries to receive U.S. funds directly and will expand that. USAID is reviewing the financial, management, procurement and expenditure systems of key ministries regarding their capacity to accept U.S. direct assistance. As of December 2009, USAID has assessed and certified that the Ministries of Public Health, Communications and Information Technology, and Finance can directly accept U.S. Government funds. Assessments of other key ministries are planned. We are using fewer big contractors, reducing the layers through which our assistance flows. Finally, we are dramatically increasing the numbers of USAID officers and inspectors to monitor our aid.

RESPONSES OF DR. ROBERT GATES TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD
BY SENATOR ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.

Question. I understand why the Afghan Public Protection Force can play a critical role in helping to secure rural areas. Having local residents take ownership in providing security will be essential to success. I am concerned however that the AP3 and other such efforts are susceptible to command by local warlords.

- Can you describe the command structure of these local forces? After we have trained them, to whom do they report?

Answer. It is important to note that the Afghan Public Protection Force (APPF), the security arm of the Afghanistan Public Protection Program (AP3), currently consists of a single pilot program in Wardak province. The APPF is NOT a tribal militia but a community-based force that is part of the Ministry of Interior. They are a uniformed service with a term of enlistment and receive salary and benefits. The personnel in the APPF are drawn from the community and are generally representative of the different ethnic and tribal groups. Since they are a security force that is part of the Afghanistan National Police, they are not under control of warlords but under the command of the district police chiefs. They sign an enlistment contract and swear an oath to the Government of Afghanistan. They are also held accountable by local community councils of elders that help select individuals for this program.

Question. Once we have achieved our desired end state with respect to security, what's the end game for these militias?

Answer. Again it is important to note that the Afghan Public Protection Force (APPF) is not a militia but a security force that is part of the Afghanistan Ministry of Interior. They are already part of the Afghan National Police (ANP) and in the long term, when security improves, they will transition into the ranks of the regular Afghan Uniform Police (AUP) or be released when their term of service when it expires.

Question. Do we have any safeguards or controls on these militias?

Answer. Again, the Afghan Public Protection Force (APPF) is NOT a militia. The APPF is under control of the Ministry of Interior and reports to the district chief of police. They also have U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) mentors with them as well as a Police Mentoring Team (PMT). The SOF and PMTs, as well as the battle space owners and local police chief all provide oversight and additional training.

Question. Who is providing arms and training to these local groups?

Answer. The Afghan Public Protection Force (APPF) recruits receive formal training from qualified Afghan National Police (ANP) Instructors at the ANP Mehter Lam Regional Training Center in Laghman province. The training and ANP Instructors are monitored by U.S. special operations forces (SOF) until their formal graduation. While at Mehter Lam, the recruits are issued uniforms, individual weapons (AK-47s) and other individual equipment which they keep for the duration of their service. The weapons are procured by the United States and provided to the recruits through the Afghan Ministry of Interior (MOI). Accountability of the weapons is maintained jointly by Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A) and the MOI. Once they graduate from initial training, the APPF receive additional sustainment training back in their district conducted by U.S. SOF, Police Mentoring Teams (PMTs), and the battle space owner.

RESPONSES OF SECRETARY OF STATE HILLARY CLINTON TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED
FOR THE RECORD BY SENATOR BOB CORKER

Question. In detail, what is the military and the civilian end objective, or definition of "success" for Afghanistan and Pakistan?

Answer. As President Obama stated in his December 1 speech at West Point, our overarching goal is to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Between now and the attainment of that goal, we must deny al-Qaeda a safe haven. We must reverse the Taliban's momentum and deny it the ability to overthrow the Government of Afghanistan. We must strengthen the capacity of Afghanistan's security forces and government, so that they can take lead responsibility for Afghanistan's future. And we must do this with the full recognition that our success in Afghanistan is inextricably linked to our partnership with Pakistan.

Success in these efforts will bring us to the point at which we can begin to transition our relationship with the Afghans to one of partnership that reflects growth in their capacity to run their own country. Ultimately, success in Afghanistan is when that country can stand on its own two feet, defend its borders, provide for internal security, and keep terrorists like al-Qaeda out.

Question. In detail, what are the ground conditions necessary to begin to drawdown of U.S. forces in Afghanistan—both positive and negative? Under what conditions would the beginning to drawdown be postponed?

Answer. In order to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, we must create conditions on the ground aimed at achieving the operational objectives which will permit the drawdown of U.S. forces in Afghanistan. We must reverse Taliban momentum, deny the Taliban access to and control over population and production centers and lines of communication, disrupt Taliban outside of secured areas and prevent al-Qaeda from gaining sanctuary, degrade Taliban capabilities to a level at which the ANSF on its own can effectively combat the Taliban, increase the size and capability of ANSF while leveraging local security forces, and selectively build the capacity of the Afghan Government.

Over the next 18 months, there will be a series of reviews which will gauge our progress in Afghanistan. The rate of drawdown and transition to our Afghan partners beginning in July 2011 will depend on conditions at that time.

Question. What level of involvement did President Karzai, or members of his government, have in the development of the new U.S. plan? Was he, or senior members of his government, completely engaged in developing the plan? What level of consultation occurred? Did Karzai know the details of the plan prior to President Obama's call on December 1 to discuss the plan? Is Karzai a full partner in the execution of the plan? Please explain your responses and any hesitations that you may have.

Answer. We are in full partnership with President Karzai and all levels of the Afghan Government. Our strategy reflects our daily consultations with President Karzai and other Afghan officials. A critical outcome of the plan the President described on December 1 will be to transition the full range of security, governance, and development activities to the Afghans as quickly as conditions and their capacity allow. This is a clear request from the Afghan Government. We expect that over the long term, we will enhance and normalize our relationship with Afghanistan and its people to reflect our own interests and their exercise of complete sovereignty. As we continue this transition, our programs and plans will make increasing use of Afghan leadership and processes, while ensuring accountability.

RESPONSES OF DR. ROBERT GATES AND ADM MICHAEL MULLEN TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY SENATOR BOB CORKER

Question. In detail, what is the military and the civilian end objective, or definition of “success” for Afghanistan and Pakistan?

Answer. As the President first stated in March, and reemphasized on 1 December 2009, the goal of the United States in Afghanistan and Pakistan is to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda and to prevent its return to both countries. The international military effort to stabilize Afghanistan is necessary to achieve this goal. Defeating al-Qaeda and enhancing Afghan security are mutually reinforcing missions.

In Afghanistan, success is an Afghanistan capable of maintaining and securing its own sovereignty and able to prevent al-Qaeda from using its territory as a safe haven. As the President said, we will begin transitioning to Afghan lead in ensuring security in Afghanistan by July 2011. This process will be conditions-based, district by district, province by province, and the pace determined by the ability of the Afghan security forces.

To this end, our military objectives are clear: reverse Taliban momentum; deny the Taliban access to and control over population and production centers and lines of communication; disrupt Taliban outside of secured areas and prevent al-Qaeda from gaining sanctuary; degrade Taliban capabilities to a level at which the ANSF on its own can effectively combat the Taliban; increase the size and capability of ANSF while leveraging local security forces; and selectively build the capacity of the Afghan Government.

Question. In detail, what are the ground conditions necessary to begin to draw-down U.S. forces in Afghanistan—both positive and negative? Under what conditions would the beginning to the drawdown be postponed?

Answer. Regarding the transition start date, it is imperative to understand that July 2011 is the beginning of a process. It is not when we rush for the exits; rather, it is when we begin the responsible drawdown of our forces and the responsible handoff of missions to our Afghan partners. There is no determination of how long this will take and there is no withdrawal date on the right-hand side of July 2011. There is also no specific guidance with respect to how many troops will be pulled out.

What we aim to do is degrade the Taliban-led insurgency while building sufficient Afghan capacity to secure and govern the country. This has a number of implications for the military mission, which now focuses on six operational objectives: reverse Taliban momentum; deny the Taliban access to and control over population and production centers and lines of communication; disrupt Taliban outside of secured areas and prevent al-Qaeda from gaining sanctuary; degrade Taliban capabilities to a level at which the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) on its own can effectively combat the Taliban; increase the size and capability of ANSF while leveraging local security forces; and selectively build the capacity of the Afghan Government. Ground conditions specifically refer to our ability to work toward these focused objectives as we continue to clear, hold, build, and ultimately transfer responsibility for security to the Afghan Government.

Question. What level of involvement did President Karzai, or members of his government, have in the development of the new U.S. plan? Was he, or senior members of his government, completely engaged in developing the plan? What level of consultation occurred? Did Karzai know the details of the plan prior to President Obama’s call on 1 December 2009 to discuss the plan? Is Karzai a full partner in the execution of the plan? Please explain your responses and any hesitations that you may have.

Answer. President Karzai and key Cabinet members were consistently consulted when appropriate in the development of our more focused strategy. The President’s strategy makes clear that our commitment to the future of Afghanistan requires action on the part of the Government of Afghanistan to fight corruption, deliver services, institute policies for reintegration of local Taliban fighters, and address other urgent problems. This is the stated goal of President Karzai and his government and we expect the Afghan leaders to achieve these goals with our support.