

THE MEANING OF MARJAH

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

UNITED STATES SENATE

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THE MEANING OF MARJAH

THURSDAY, MAY 6, 2010

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:32 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. John Kerry (chairman of the committee) presiding.

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

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

The CHAIRMAN. The hearing will come to order. Thank you very, very much for coming today. I am particularly grateful to our witnesses who have traveled considerable distance at one time or another with respect to both this hearing and the experience that they bring to the table.

Last year, as we all know, the administration faced some very tough choices with respect to Afghanistan and Pakistan, and we explored all those options in considerable depth here within the committee; and today we want to try to exercise the oversight obligations of the committee and the Congress to examine the impact of those decisions. How have those decisions turned out? Where are we today, and where are we going?

This is the first congressional hearing on our mission in Marjah. Before our offensive began there in February, this small village in Southern Afghanistan was unknown to most of the outside world and perhaps even to an awful lot of Afghans. Today, it has become the leading edge of the administration's new strategy; though by the administration's own acknowledgement, it's really a testing ground and a sort of start to what we all understand is a larger effort that will ultimately take place in Kandahar itself.

Marjah is the site of the largest coalition offensive since 2001, the first major combat operation since the President unveiled the new strategy in December, and that's why the meaning of our efforts there merits some examination.

Today, Marjah does not appear to be a turning point in the overall mission. That is not to suggest it was absolutely meant to be. But it is not. Although the outcome in military terms was never in doubt, our Marines and their NATO and Afghan partners performed heroically and we honor them and thank them profoundly for the sacrifices they made and for the extraordinary quality of their service.

Marjah also is not a great Afghan city, like Kabul, Herat, or Kandahar; but Marjah and neighboring Nadali do have strategic and symbolic importance. Marjah was the last Taliban stronghold in the Central Helmand River Valley and it was the poppy production hub of Afghanistan and the world. So establishing long-term security there and developing a legitimate economy in Helmand province would significantly undercut our enemies and help our overall effort.

I think it's fair to say, and I think our witnesses will say—incidentally we're not going to go into any in-depth discussion today about Kandahar, sort of off limits basically for all the obvious reasons that clearly the challenges in a big city like Kandahar are going to differ dramatically from the challenges of Marjah. But, nevertheless, what we did face in Marjah represents something of strategic and symbolic importance.

First, it was the last Taliban stronghold in the Central Helmand River Valley and, as I mentioned, the poppy production hub. So establishing a long-term security capacity there and developing a legitimate economy is critical.

We are looking now for better cooperation within our integrated civilian-military effort, and between the coalition forces and all levels of the Afghan Government; and those are going to be vital as the mission moves beyond Marjah.

It is encouraging that Afghan security forces and Gov. Gulab Mangal of Helmand province were involved in the planning and execution of that offensive; and soon after the major fighting ended, President Hamid Karzai visited Marjah and signaled his commitment to a new beginning there.

So let's look quickly at, sort of, at least from our perspective, what this new start may have brought us. There are indications that we are making progress. United States forces have embarked on a robust effort to help Afghans clear rubble from schools, clean canals, repair markets, build bridges, and compensate families who lost members as a result of combat.

On the civilian side, we are starting to put locals to work. We're providing agriculture vouchers to wean farmers from poppy production and, though the officials there continue to face threats from the Taliban and those threats do constrain their movements, with our help, a local Afghan Government is in place in Marjah for the first time in years.

So we are finally changing the way we do business, but—and I think our panel would agree with this—unless these changes resonate with Afghans, they're not going to be enough. The ultimate measure of our success is going to be whether we can win the trust of the Afghan people and transfer security and governance to them.

Our challenge was never just to clear the territory. It has always been to hold it, to build it, and then to transfer it. I think transfer is probably the single most critical element of all: transferring that territory, its control and management back to our Afghan partners.

Now, on the negative side, unfortunately, the initial word from hundreds of villagers in Marjah suggests the full measure of our challenge. A recent survey conducted by the International Council on Security and Development showed that a vast majority of the

villagers felt negatively about foreign troops and felt that more young Afghans had joined the Taliban over the last year.

Worse still, were the reasons that they had signed up with the Taliban. They said they joined because they had no jobs, because they had no money to get married or to buy land, and because they had no other future.

In short, the coalition and their own government, they felt, had not provided alternatives. These concerns have to carry weight. Addressing the discontent of the Afghan people is a key to improving our chances of defeating the Taliban and its affiliates, or at least, if not defeating it—I always want to be careful about how we define our goals here—at least to empowering the Government of Afghanistan, local and national, to be able to carry the weight of this struggle.

I look forward, therefore, to discussing these and other issues with President Karzai during his visit to Washington next week. It's clear we still have a formidable task ahead of us in Afghanistan. We are very fortunate to have with us as witnesses who can speak directly to that; folks who have had a lot of on-the-ground, firsthand, lengthy, in-depth experience in this effort.

Frank Ruggiero is the top American civilian official in southern Afghanistan where he coordinates our governance, development, and reconstruction projects, and I've just learned will be coming soon to Washington to serve as the Deputy to Ambassador Holbrooke.

Mr. Ruggiero, I especially want to thank you for coming here today to do this and I know you're going back afterward, and we are enormously grateful to you for that and the work you have done there.

We're also pleased to welcome BG John Nicholson, the Director of the Pakistan-Afghanistan Coordination Cell for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Until just a few months ago, General Nicholson was helping to lead the military campaign in southern Afghanistan.

I had the pleasure of meeting him there, I appreciate the insightful briefing that he gave us last year on our flight to Zabul, and I look forward to hearing his thoughts again today. And also joining them at the table is David Sedney, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

So again, I remind folks we are not going to be examining this morning any of the details of the upcoming efforts in Kandahar, but I think there is a lot of meat to digest, notwithstanding that. So we thank you for coming here.

General Nicholson first and then Ambassador Ruggiero and Mr. Sedney.

STATEMENT OF BG JOHN NICHOLSON, DIRECTOR, PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN COORDINATION CELL, JOINT STAFF, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, WASHINGTON, DC

General NICHOLSON. Well, thank you, Senator Kerry, and thanks for the opportunity to come here and discuss these important operations in southern Afghanistan.

I also want to thank you, sir, for your continued support to our service men and women and our civilian partners in Afghanistan. They're doing a very tough job in the most difficult conditions and

thank you for your personal visits to them, to visit them in that environment.

And although I've been back, as you mentioned, for a few months, I appreciate the opportunity to appear here with my former civilian counterpart from Regional Command-South, Frank Ruggiero.

When I arrived in RC-South in October 2008, there were a total of 10 U.S. Government civilians in the entire southern region. There are now over a hundred and that number is growing. More importantly, Frank represents the creation of the Senior Civilian Rep position which has enabled a greater unity of effort between the civil and military efforts, so greater integration in the execution of our campaign in RC-South.

So what I'd like to do is just make a few opening comments on the context of Marjah in terms of its importance within Helmand, within the southern region, and then within Afghanistan overall, and then also to talk a little bit about counterinsurgency from a practitioner's perspective which will also help our understanding of what's happening in Central Helmand.

So when we look at it in the context of those areas, as you know, sir, most of our effort in the ISAF Campaign is focused in the eastern and southern regions of the country where most of the support for the insurgency exists.

In the southern region, our allies have done a tremendous amount of heavy lifting for the coalitions, 17 different nations. Some of those nations have suffered a higher percentage of casualties than the United States. Given that this is a population-focused Coin Campaign, when we look at the south then, we look at two primary areas which you mentioned, sir, the Kandahar, Greater Kandahar Area, and Central Helmand, and by securing the population in those two areas, we in fact secure the majority of the population in southern Afghanistan.

Southern Afghanistan, by securing that population and helping to connect them to their government and generate support for the government from that population, we in fact then get at the majority of the Pashtun Tribal Areas which is instrumental to the overall solution in Afghanistan.

Talking about the specific Helmand area, in close cooperation with our British allies who have been in Helmand since 2006, we began our operations there really in the spring of 2008 with the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, commanded by Col. Pete Petronzio, went into Garmsir in the spring of 2008, cleared it of the enemy, and we've been in a hold-build since that time.

In July 2009, with the initial tranche of troops approved by President Obama, 1,095 Marines, as part of the Marine Expeditionary Brigade-Afghanistan, went into the Naway District which is just north of Garmsir and cleared that, and we've again had troops along with Afghan partners in that area since that time.

This enabled the British forces in Helmand to concentrate their efforts in some of the areas north of Garmsir and Naway to do a clearing operation simultaneously with our ops last summer into the Lashkar Gah Boba-G area.

The point of all this explanation, sir, is that we've concentrated, we've cleared systematically over the course of the last 2 years,

some of the key and most densely populated areas resulting in this remaining enemy sanctuary and this remaining narco-trafficking sanctuary in the area of Marjah.

So with President Obama's approval of the additional forces in December, we were able to go in and finally clear the Marjah area and this then gets at the majority of the most densely populated areas in Central Helmand. So from the District of Garmsir in the south all the way up to Gereshk and then with our British partners in Sangin to the north we now have ISAF and Gyroa forces in the majority of Central Helmand.

I would also mention concurrent with this has been the approved and funded growth of the Afghan National Security Forces. So we are seeing this year in 2010 the additional creation of an Afghan Corps that will be headquartered in Helmand. So whereas our operations last summer were conducted with a single brigade of the Afghan National Army, over the course of 2010 we will grow a three-brigade corps of the Afghan Army in the Helmand and Nimruse provinces. So there's a growth that's occurred, as well.

Additionally, Afghan National Civil Order Police were dispatched to the area to assist in the effort and that has enabled us to take the police that were in Marjah for retraining and then a reintroduction eventually into the Marjah area to address one of the principal issues we've had there which is that connection between the government and the population.

Sir, what I'd like to do is just briefly mention the narcotics issue and you mentioned it in your opening comments, sir. As we know, Afghanistan produces over 90 percent of the world's opium. A majority of that is grown, is cultivated in the southern region, and Helmand has the most densely cultivated areas of poppy growth in the southern region.

By virtue of securing the population in RC-South, we de facto are also in many of the poppy-producing areas. What we have found is, through the Jirga Programs, spearheaded by Governor Mangal, the Governor of Helmand province, with his Food Zone Program, in areas that we have been able to provide a degree of security, he has had greater success with his counternarcotics program which is designed to help the farmers transition from poppy to licit agriculture and this does a couple things for us.

One, it enables the recreation of a self-sustaining licit economic structure in the south and, two, it undercuts funding from the growth of opium that goes into the insurgency, and the United Nations estimates that that is in the amount of several hundred million dollars a year.

Sir, a word on counterinsurgency from a practitioner's perspective. I think most folks are aware with the acronym Shape, Clear, Hold, and Transfer. What I'd like to provide is a little more granularity to what that means at the practical level.

So when we talk about the Clear phase of an operation, our goal is to separate the enemy from the people and this separation can occur in many ways. There's a physical separation by killing or capturing or forcing an enemy to flee or, ideally, though, getting them to reintegrate back into society would be our real goal, and in the Afghan tradition, this is a much-respected way of resolving conflicts.

So when we look at the Afghan Government and military today, you see many former enemies from the Communist era, former Communists, former mujahideen together in the government, in the military working together toward a solution. So reintegration is one of the goals in the clearing phase.

When we shift to the Hold phase, the key task that occurs in that phase is the connection between the people and their government and this is not a forgone conclusion in Afghanistan. They're on their fifth form of government in 30 years. There's great skepticism about that government. They have in some of these areas that have been under Taliban control, they have not seen or interacted with their government. You have some fairly resilient social forms of governance that have high legitimacy but no resources.

So when we bring in the government, what we're trying to do is effect that nexus between a government which has access to resources but low legitimacy with social forms of governance which have higher legitimacy but great needs. The creation of a secure environment enables that nexus to flourish and that is what we seek to do in that second phase.

And then in the Build phase, if you will, what we're really talking about is building Afghan capacity toward an eventual transfer of responsibilities, as you mentioned. So the security capacity is clearly at the top of that list to enable them to take over security responsibilities, but also building their governance capacity and their ability to deliver basic services to the people.

So that in a nutshell, from a practical perspective, is what we're after when we talk about Shape, Clear, Hold, and Build.

The final thing I'd say, sir, is that this is a work in progress. We're 83 days into the Marjah operation. As I mentioned, we're seeing positive effects in Garmsir and Naway, having begun those in the spring of 2008 and the summer of 2009, respectively.

I've seen the same reports initially out of Marjah. My only comment on that, sir, would be those surveys were probably done in the early stages of the clearing operation, perhaps in the 30-to-45-day mark, and I'm not surprised to hear there's some negative feedback as troops are clearing the neighborhood, as there's kinetic activity going on, and reflecting a condition that's existed for years previously of low employment and a desire for basic services.

So we have heard of those concerns and with our operations ongoing, which we'll talk about more here during the hearing, we're addressing those concerns.

So again, sir, work in progress but trending in the right direction and again, sir, thank you for the opportunity and look forward to the questions.

[The prepared joint statement of Assistant Secretary Sedney and General Nicholson follows:]

PREPARED JOINT STATEMENT OF DAVID SAMUEL SEDNEY, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN AND CENTRAL ASIA, AND BG JOHN W. NICHOLSON, JR., DIRECTOR, PAKISTAN AFGHANISTAN COORDINATION CELL, THE JOINT STAFF, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, WASHINGTON, DC

Chairman Kerry, Ranking Member Lugar, and members of the committee, we're pleased to have this opportunity to give you an update on our ongoing efforts in Afghanistan. You understand the importance of this mission, the magnitude of the

challenges we face there and the depth of our commitment to meeting those challenges.

When President Obama took office, we confronted a bleak situation. Early gains had eroded, the Taliban was reascendant in many parts of the country, and Afghan confidence in the coalition was in decline. President Obama ordered an immediate strategy review, and in the course of that preliminary review we made a number of key changes. The U.S. Government added 38,000 troops last spring, and NATO appointed General McChrystal as commander of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). General McChrystal has emphasized the importance of a counterinsurgency strategy that prioritizes protecting the Afghan people over killing the enemy.

In his December speech at West Point, the President announced a number of key refinements to our Afghanistan strategy including the deployment of additional U.S. Forces. As of April 23, over 15,000 of the additional 30,000 U.S. troops have been deployed to the country. The remainder will be in place where they are needed by the end of summer 2010, supplemented by over 9,000 additional NATO and non-NATO troops, over 2,000 more than had been pledged in January 2010. Over 3,000 of these international troops are in place.

Partnering and improvements in Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF) training are accelerating ANSF growth and improving the quality of the force, with an emphasis on creating a force that is both effective and sustainable. Equally important has been the drastically expanded and overhauled civilian effort. Today there are more than three times the number of U.S. direct hire civilians in Afghanistan than there were a year ago, and over four times more civilian personnel deployed alongside our military personnel on Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and District Support Teams (DSTs) outside of Kabul. As Secretary Gates notes recently, our State, USAID, and other civilian partners are critical to our overall military success in Afghanistan. Our military and civilian missions are integrated, and our military personnel depend upon their civilian counterparts to help stabilize and rebuild after the fight.

As we stated in our April 2010 report on "Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan," submitted in accordance with section 1230 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181), the evidence suggests that our shift in approach has begun to bear fruit, even as significant challenges remain. We assess that the insurgency's momentum has been blunted. Closer coordination with President Karzai, the Afghan Government, coalition allies and those in the region, particularly Pakistan, is paying off as we see more and more of a common effort.

Due to our change in approach, the percentage of Afghan civilian casualties caused by coalition actions has dropped substantially. This improvement has produced significant shifts in Afghan attitudes toward ISAF and Afghan forces. Compared to a year ago, Afghans today report that they are far more optimistic about the future and have far more confidence in our ability to prevail over the Taliban and other violent extremist forces.

We've seen other positive indicators in the last year, as well. Of the 121 key terrain districts identified by ISAF in December 2009, 60 were assessed as sympathetic or neutral to the Afghan Government. By March 2010, that number had climbed to 73 districts. Although Afghanistan's August elections were marred by allegations of electoral fraud, these allegations were addressed through constitutional means. Ultimately, a new government was formed. Despite the serious issues that remain to be addressed, a national survey completed in March 2010 indicates that 59 percent of Afghans believe their government is headed in the right direction, an increase of 0.5 percent over December 2009 and 8 percent over September 2009.

At the January 28 London conference, following up on pledges he made in his November inaugural speech, President Karzai reaffirmed his government's commitment to peace, reconciliation and reintegration, developing security force capability, good governance, fighting corruption, economic development and regional cooperation. These commitments have received strong international support as the international community partners with the Afghan Government in a long-term strategy to stabilize Afghanistan.

The London conference also produced a renewed international commitment to strengthen civilian-military coordination in Afghanistan. This commitment was reflected in part by the announcement of a new NATO Senior Civilian Representative who is now serving as General McChrystal's civilian counterpart, as well as the appointment of Staffan de Mistura, an experienced United Nations (U.N.) diplomat, as the new Special Representative of the U.N. Secretary General for the U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). An international conference will be conducted in Kabul in July, allowing for the Afghan Government to present its

plans for accelerating efforts to improve economic opportunity, security, and governance.

The Afghan Government is in the lead for reconciliation and reintegration efforts. President Karzai has issued interim guidance for the execution of reintegration programs, with final guidance expected after completion of the Consultative Peace Jirga later this month. Karzai's guidance assigns responsibility to the Provincial governors to implement programs that will allow reintegration into civil society of those mid- to low-level insurgents who break ties with al-Qaeda, cease violence, and accept the Afghan Constitution, including the rights and protections for women and ethnic groups. We expect to release funding from the Afghan Reintegration Program Authority, authorized in the FY10 National Defense Authorization Act. The ARPA will fund DOD reintegration activities in support of the Afghan program.

President Karzai will visit Washington next week. A number of key ministers will join him and participate in meetings on themes critical to achieving our joint objectives implementing the Afghan Government's London conference commitments. Meetings with President Obama and U.S. Cabinet officials will reinforce the long-term and vital partnership between our two countries in areas ranging from security to governance and economic development. The visit will also highlight the continuing support among Afghans for U.S. support to Afghanistan, particularly appreciation for the sacrifice being made by U.S. soldiers and civilians working alongside their Afghan counterparts. During the visit, we expect to discuss a strengthened United States-Afghan Strategic Partnership Declaration, to be finalized later this year. This is a shared priority for the Afghans and for us, and we believe it will add confidence and clarity to our long-term partnership with Afghanistan. The Declaration will outline a shared vision for how the United States plans to support Afghanistan, as well as how we plan to work with Afghanistan's neighbors to integrate it into a more supportive and prosperous regional environment. None of these steps will guarantee success. But we are seeing conditions that we believe are necessary for success to begin to emerge. We have the right mission, the right strategy, and the right leadership team in place. U.S., international and Afghan civilian and military resources have been marshaled to effectively support the mission. The majority of international forces in Afghanistan are now under Commander, ISAF's (COMISAF's) command, ensuring greater unity of command.

Our efforts to build the capacity of the Afghanistan National Security Forces are showing progress, though significant challenges remain. Currently, the Afghan National Army (ANA) strength is at 119,338, well above the April target of 116,500, compared to an authorized strength of 134,000 for FY 2010. The Afghan National Police (ANP) has reached 102,138, with an authorized strength of 109,000 for FY 2010. In FY11, our goal is to build the ANA to 171,600, and the ANP to 134,000. We think these goals are achievable. Indeed the international community must publicly commit to supporting the training and equipping of Afghanistan's security forces even after our combat forces begin a responsible drawdown.

Nevertheless, risks to the growth and quality of both Ministry of Defense (MOD) and Ministry of Interior (MOI) forces remain. The newly formed NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A), led by LTG William Caldwell, is working closely with the MOD and MOI to improve recruiting, training, retention and attrition. For example, salary and benefit initiatives have raised pay for the ANSF and addressed pay disparities between ANA and ANP forces. The MOI has created institutions like the MOI Recruiting and Training Commands to institutionalize best practices. The MOI is also implementing a revised ANP development model that will ensure all recruits receive adequate training before they are deployed in field. The Focused District Development program has provided follow-on training for Afghan Uniformed Police in 83 districts. The Focused Border Development program is accomplishing the same for the Afghan Border Police. The MOI has, in coordination with NTM-A, initiated planning to address leadership and professional development and to identify ways to counter corruption. NTM-A/Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A) is working with the MOI to institute a competitive selection and promotion process that is transparent and merit based. COMISAF has directed that the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP) partnering program be expanded to provide direct mentoring. A rotation program has been implemented for ANCOP to ensure the units have an opportunity to refit and refresh after extended counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. All of these initiatives demonstrate the considerable attention being given to improve the quality of the ANSF force.

We are also beginning to see signs of progress resulting from using development to support sustainable governance. Less than a year ago, Arghandab was an insurgent safe haven. After some tough fighting last summer and fall, the conditions for establishing security and implementing governance and development programs began to emerge. International actors are partnering with the Afghan district

governor, local tribal leadership, an ANA Kandak and local Afghan Police to develop the programs that are building a foundation for governance and economic development.

This is not to suggest that achieving success in Afghanistan will be easy, far from it; we face many challenges as we move forward. As already mentioned, we continue to struggle to improve retention and decrease attrition in the ANSF, and we also need to continue to improve the quality of the force. In the face of continued shortfalls, we are engaging in aggressive diplomatic efforts to encourage our international partners to provide institutional trainers and mentoring teams for the ANSF. A series of NATO meetings over the last 5 months, including the April Foreign Ministerial, focused heavily on addressing these shortfalls.

Inevitably, we will face setbacks even as we achieve successes. We also need to prepare for the possibility that things will get worse before they get better. As additional U.S. and other international forces flow into theater and move into other geographic areas where ISAF forces have not previously gone, we have seen increases in violence and increases in attacks on our troops. Our adversaries are intelligent and adaptable, and we will need to continuously refine our own tactics in response.

As you all know, operations in Helmand are ongoing, along with planning and shaping efforts for future operations in Kandahar. I want to emphasize that for ISAF and our Afghan partners, Helmand operations have been the first large-scale effort to fundamentally change how we do business. In Helmand, protecting the population is our top priority, along with ensuring that our military operations to “clear” Marjah pave the way for truly Afghan-led governance and economic development activities in the “hold” and “build” phases. Preparation for the operation included extraordinary levels of civil-military planning and engagement with the Afghans—from ANSF partners, to Afghan ministries, to local tribes and populations with the operation ultimately approved and ordered by President Karzai. Kandahar involves some fundamentally different challenges that will require different approaches. In the end, however, the success of both of these efforts will be largely dependent on tackling the whole-of-government challenge of building and sustaining governance and security institutions.

Let me conclude by underscoring our assessment that the insurgency is losing momentum and we are heading in the right direction. That said, the outcome is far from determined. While over 50 percent of additional forces are in place, those still to come are critical to achieving success. None of what we are doing in Afghanistan involves quick fixes. These are long-term problems, and their solutions will require both patience and flexibility. At this point, though, we are cautiously optimistic. As said earlier, we believe we finally have the right mission, the right strategy, the right leadership, and the right resources. As we move forward, we will continue to adjust—and we believe that we will continue to make progress.

As you know, the Congress is considering DOD’s FY11 budget request, including \$110.3 billion for Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) within Overseas Contingency Operations, as well as an FY10 Supplemental request for \$28.8 billion for OEF. These funds are critical to supporting the solution set for our mission in Afghanistan, and I ask for your support.

Thank you. We look forward to your questions and comments.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much. Senator Lugar has joined me. Did you want to make any opening, Senator?

Senator LUGAR. Why don’t we continue with the testimony?

The CHAIRMAN. Great. All right.

Ambassador.

STATEMENT OF MR. FRANK RUGGIERO, SENIOR CIVILIAN REPRESENTATIVE, REGIONAL COMMAND-SOUTH, DEPARTMENT OF STATE, KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN

Mr. RUGGIERO. Thank you, Senator Kerry. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on Marjah and our broader efforts to stabilize southern Afghanistan.

I have a written statement that I’d like to submit for the record. I’ll keep my opening—

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection, it will be put in.

Mr. RUGGIERO. I'll keep my opening comments very short. I understand you have a hard deadline at 10 o'clock.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, we have some flexibility in it.

Mr. RUGGIERO. OK. I would just make a couple opening comments.

First of all, we greatly appreciate the support of the Congress to what we're trying to do in southern Afghanistan. I think we're at a critical moment in turning the momentum in the south against the Taliban. I think General McChrystal's strategy is leading to that moment where we could see change in the momentum.

I again greatly appreciate the support of the Congress. I have on various occasions traveled with many members of this committee, Senator Kaufman twice, throughout southern Afghanistan.

I want to say thank you to General Nicholson for the kind words in his opening comments. When I arrived in southern Afghanistan, General Nicholson was the Deputy Commander of RC-South and he personally welcomed me to southern Afghanistan and he set the conditions for the civilian uplift and how effective it has been in southern Afghanistan.

Just a few words on the civilian uplift itself. Senator Kerry said I'm the Senior Civilian Representative in southern Afghanistan. I have the authority of the Chief of Mission in the South. This was an invention by Ambassador Eikenberry to push authority down into the field in a combat zone.

When I arrived in southern Afghanistan, there were about 8 or 10 U.S. civilians in southern Afghanistan. We expanded that to over a hundred. I have people at the district level, at the provincial level, working with the Afghans on a day-to-day basis, working with our military counterparts to bring governance and stability and economic development to southern Afghanistan.

With that, I'll end my closing remarks. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ruggiero follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF FRANK RUGGIERO, U.S. SENIOR CIVILIAN REPRESENTATIVE,
REGIONAL COMMAND-SOUTH, DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the opportunity to testify before this committee on recent United States and international civil-military activities in the Marjah District of Helmand province, as well as our broader efforts to support the Afghan Government in its efforts to provide expanded governance and improved socioeconomic opportunities across southern Afghanistan. I'm pleased to be here today with BG Mick Nicholson from the U.S. Army, who has been a superb partner for both our civilian team in the South and also for our Afghan partners.

THE CIVILIAN UPLIFT

In March 2009, President Obama announced our intent to expand greatly the number of U.S. civilian experts working in Afghanistan, and especially the number of USG civilians deployed outside of Kabul. The President highlighted this increased presence when he announced an additional 30,000 troops for Afghanistan in December 2009, and Secretary Clinton has emphasized that a robust civilian presence and assistance mission will need to continue well beyond the conclusion of our combat mission.

When I arrived in Kandahar to assume the new position of Senior Civilian Representative for Southern Afghanistan in July 2009, there were a total of eight U.S. civilians serving the six provinces that constitute Regional Command-South (RC/S). That number has grown steadily and we now have over 100 U.S. civilian officers from the State Department, USAID, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture serving

at the RC/S headquarters as well as in four international Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and 12 newly formed District Support Teams (DSTs). We very much appreciate the support of Congress in enabling us to better address the huge needs in RC-S with greater human and financial resources.

The State, USAID, and USDA representatives at our PRTs and DSTs actively engage with the Afghan provincial and district governments, offering them support and working in tandem to develop Afghan Government capacity and implement development projects crucial to the success of our overall military mission. These officers operate in the most challenging of circumstances.

The DSTs are a critical innovation to extend the reach of the Afghan Government to the grassroots, which is key to General McChrystal's counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy. DSTs typically consist of one State, one USAID, and one USDA representative. Their working and living conditions vary from district to district, but their primary role is to engage with the district government on a close basis. In fact, they frequently live at or within the district government compound. Working in partnership with district government leadership, U.S. military counterparts, and Afghan security forces, the DST supports activities such as creating workable district development plans and forming representative community councils. They seek to strengthen the district government's links with provincial authorities to ensure the needs of the district are conveyed and that appropriate ministries in Kabul address their needs, always with transition ultimately in mind. In areas and districts where the Afghan Government has recently asserted greater authority, DSTs, in partnership with ISAF, become the backbone in support of Afghan governance.

U.S. civilians have a very close working relationship with ISAF at all levels. However, they fall under the Chief of Mission authority of Ambassador Eikenberry and their activities are directed and coordinate by me and my interagency team co-located with the RC-South military headquarters at Kandahar. In the South, I am the partner of the RC/S Commander, U.K. Maj. Gen. Nick Carter.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HELMAND AND MARJAH

Recent civ-mil operations in Marjah are part of the wider Operation Moshtarak, which in Dari means "together." Operations include not only Marjah, but the larger Nad-e-Ali district. These operations are an example of the expanded U.S. civilian presence that, working with our Afghan and ISAF partners, seeks to extend Afghan governance authority across the South. In the past year, we conducted similar stability operations in Arghandab, Nawa, and Garmsir. So, why Marjah, and why now?

From a counterinsurgency perspective, the Helmand River Valley is key to securing the population of southern Afghanistan. Over 75 percent of the population of Helmand resides in the districts between Gereshk and Garmsir on the Helmand River; Marjah is a key district in this area of approximately 100 square miles with an estimated population of 40–50 thousand in the new Marjah district boundaries. U.S. Marines and British forces cleared much of central Helmand in the summer of 2009, but Marjah and parts of Nad-e-Ali district remained under Taliban control. The Taliban view Helmand as a key province to control and to use as a supply route for its activities throughout the south and further north. In recent years, Helmand has been Afghanistan's most violent province and has produced by far the most narcotics, but it is also the province with the largest percentage of arable land and is among the most populated. Strategically, Helmand is also critically linked to the development and security of neighboring Kandahar province. For decades, the United States has had significant interests in working with the Afghan Government to develop and build capacity in Helmand, including in the 1950s building the irrigation system that created many Helmand population centers, including Marjah.

Marjah was under direct Taliban and narcobaron control from 2008 until the Afghan Government reasserted its authority with international support in February 2010. Marjah has been a staging ground for attacks on government-controlled areas, including a number of attacks on the provincial capital Lashkar Gah less than 20 miles away. The town was also producing a great proportion of the IEDs used against Afghan and international forces in Helmand. With its richly irrigated farmland, Marjah was also Helmand's primary poppy growing district. Marjah was thus not only one of the last Taliban strongholds in central Helmand but through illicit crop taxation, a productive financial source for insurgents.

The operation in Marjah also had important effects for Nawa, another key district in Helmand, adjacent to Marjah. Throughout late 2009 and early 2010, Nawa district leaders and citizens were wary of the negative influence from their neighbor. Within a month of the formation of the Nawa community council in October 2009, Taliban taking refuge in Marjah assassinated three members, including the chairman. After these killings, the community council took several months to rebound to

a point where members felt safe enough to represent their villages openly. Additionally, Taliban control of Marjah restricted Nawa residents' freedom of movement as they were scared to travel on roads when the enemy could attack them and then easily retreat to Marjah. As Marjah's security expands, Nawa's security, governance, and economic growth will also progress, as will the conditions in neighboring Nad-e-Ali and the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah, total population of around ½ million.

A NEW LEVEL OF PARTNERSHIP WITH AFGHANS

Operation Moshtarak to clear Marjah and Nad-e-Ali districts represented a new level of partnership between the Afghan Government and the international community to plan and implement a fully integrated civilian-military clearance and stabilization operation, with Helmand Governor Mangal in the lead. Plans were developed in complete consultation with Afghan authorities. And Governor Mangal led a delegation together with his Afghan Security partners—and including Afghan police and army counterparts—to brief President Karzai and his National Security Council in late January. General Carter and I spent many hours with our Afghan counterparts planning this operation to ensure the political context was set, Afghan forces were available and partnered with ISAF forces, and the Governor Mangal-led stabilization plan was in place. The Afghan Government also made a concerted effort—through the Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG)—to develop a District Development Plan in Nad-e-Ali, including Marjah, to create enhanced local governance capacity. This included filling the staffing patterns of district-level government offices once clearing operations were concluded. Filling these government positions is key to our COIN efforts to extend Afghan governance authority in key districts and has been a significant challenge due to limited Afghan capacity. There are Afghan civil servants qualified to fill positions at the provincial or district level, but most are reluctant to actively occupy positions in recently cleared areas throughout Helmand. Some officials have returned to Nad-e-Ali and Marjah districts, but it will remain an ongoing effort to convince Afghan civil servants to work from these district centers.

Operation Moshtarak proceeded only after receiving final approval of Afghan authorities. On February 11, Minister of Interior Atmar and Governor Mangal convened a well-attended meeting, dubbed a “super shura,” with local elders in Lashkar Gah to discuss Operation Moshtarak and respond to questions and concerns. At President Karzai's request, Governor Mangal held a follow-up shura on February 12 with a smaller group of key Marjah elders to ensure that all of the operational details were understood. On the evening of February 12, President Karzai authorized the launch of the operation. Hours later, at approximately 0200 on February 13, Afghan and ISAF forces commenced operations.

D-DAY

In the weeks leading up to Operation Moshtarak, State Department and USAID civilians, as well as USAID implementing partners, worked side by side with their Afghan and ISAF counterparts to prepare for the launch of the operation. The degree of civilian integration and planning exceeded all previous efforts in Afghanistan. Heeding the advice of RC-South and the U.S. Marines, and acting in coordination with Afghan Government authorities, U.S. civilians entered Marjah at D+4 with the District Governor elect to conduct a development survey. Once military forces secured an area near the Marjah village center for a secure forward operating base, U.S. civilians, as well as several Afghan Government representatives, moved their operations to Marjah and established residency there. On February 25, the Afghan flag was raised at the Nad-e-Ali district center. On March 7, President Karzai, accompanied by several ministers, visited Marjah and met with local residents.

MARJAH TODAY

Although still early in the campaign—less than 3 months into the hold phase—conditions in and around Marjah are becoming more secure since the launch of the operation. Freedom of movement is improving for local residents, including commercial movement to and from markets in Lashkar Gah. Residents in some parts of Marjah, however, continue to be intimidated and harassed by insurgents and the levels of violence remain a hindrance to establishing Afghan governance and stability operations.

While still hindered by the lack of security and freedom of movement, the Afghan Government presence in Marjah is becoming larger and more active, with the support of U.S. and U.K. civilians. With the exception of Nad-e-Ali, there are now more

permanent civil servants working in Marjah than in any other district in Helmand. District Governor Haji Zahir is reaching out aggressively to elders and communities and is present in the district center, which is currently undergoing refurbishment. The bulk of his immediate staff is in place, including the Chief Executive, Office Director, Sector Director, and District/Village Officer. There are a growing number of line ministry officials working in Marjah on a seconded basis from the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), the Ministry of Rural Reconstruction and Development (MRRD), the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Public Health. In addition, there is now a prosecutor, seven National Directorate of Security (NDS) officials, and five Criminal Investigative Division (CID) officials in Marjah. This increase must be tempered against the reality that Afghan governance capacity is limited and even the creation of this level of government is likely to prove a challenge to replicate in other key districts in any short-term timeframe.

There are other important, ongoing activities in Marjah: construction of a new government center has begun; roads are under construction; over 2,000 farmers have benefited from the a poppy transition program; and about 4,000 water pumps and agricultural support packages will be distributed by USAID under the Afghanistan Vouchers for Increased Production in Agriculture (AVIPA) Plus program. Public services such as health, education, water, and dispute settlement are starting to be provided. Students at Luy Cherey Boys High School in Marjah are now going to classes in temporary tents. The classes were moved from the damaged school building to the temporary tents, so that demolition and construction of a new school building can begin at the site. Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) are increasingly visible on the streets and bazaars of Marjah and now occupy an ever increasing number of observation posts at the major intersections. There is also an increasingly level of commercial activity. There is, however, a long way to go.

THE FUTURE OF MARJAH

The governance outlook for Marjah is generally positive. Afghan officials in Kabul are working with the provincial and district governments to provide more support from the central government. They are seeking ways to increase the quantity and quality of Afghan National Police deployed in the district in coordination with the international community and ISAF. Both Governor Mangal and the Marjah District Governor are engaged in an aggressive political outreach campaign to understand community needs that must be addressed and to ensure that residents recognize the government is seeking to address those concerns. Key officials also remain engaged in implementing the District Development Plan, soliciting assistance for all sectors from the central government and international community.

ISAF will continue to work closely with Afghan authorities at all levels. Given that the face of ISAF is often the first seen by residents after a clearing operation, ISAF forces play an important role in ensuring a smooth transition from security operations to civilian-led development operations. The Marines understand this. ISAF forces will continue to work with civilian and Afghan counterparts to achieve maximum results. U.S. civilians, working with their U.K. and Danish counterparts at the Helmand PRT, will continue to support the Marjah DST, currently Afghanistan's largest DST in terms of international money and staff. The PRT will also continue to work with the provincial and district governments on political outreach and to push for greater line ministry representation and delivery for Marjah.

CHALLENGES

Governance can only improve as fast as Afghan authorities can provide properly trained staff with adequate salaries and benefits that will ensure they stay on the job. Security also plays a crucial role in increasing governance capacity. Representatives of some line ministries continue to refuse to stay in Marjah, fearing intimidation and violence, and those officials who do show up to work require greater freedom of movement to become effective service providers.

There is no "one size fits all" strategy for development and capacity-building in districts following "clearing" operations. Nawa and Garmsir districts, for example, followed different, yet largely successful paths. But the one common feature is that of the different phases of counterinsurgency (shape, clear, hold, build, transfer), "clear" is vital but not the decisive phase, it is the "shape" phase and the prospect of what comes in the "hold" phase that is decisive in southern Afghanistan. Likewise, conditions in Marjah are unique in some respects. A ready-made government concept cannot take into account all the intricacies for proper governance capacity building. Having a district governor in Marjah with a staff within the first 45 days following the launch of the operations was no small feat for rural Afghanistan, but

more resources and greater central government support will push the government to better, higher levels. Afghan capacity, however, remains limited.

Although these are real challenges, we expect that efforts by the Afghan Government and international community to improve conditions in Marjah will persist. As has happened in some other districts in the South, such as Nawa, Garmsir, and Arghandab, solid, measureable progress in Marjah could likely be achieved in the months to come. The key to success at the district level is to tie Afghans to their government and allow local residents to believe in a future without Taliban intimidation. This takes time, resources, and persistent security. And great patience.

The CHAIRMAN. Wow. Those are pretty brief opening remarks. I think we'll have to bring you back here and have you lead our witness school and get everybody similarly prepped.

Well, thank you, both. Again, thanks for the job you're doing and thanks for the testimony. It's helpful.

Help us to understand. Do you agree with General Nicholson's sense that those comments—I thought that that analysis had been made fairly recently. So in the back end, when the kinetic had stopped but that doesn't mean there wouldn't be some spillover in the impact, but what about this notion that more people joined the Taliban?

I mean, this is always one of the arguments you hear about any of the kinetic operations that we engage in, that they wind up encouraging that. What's your take? Are we still looking at an Afghanistan where you're looking at about a 90-percent dislike of the Taliban?

Mr. RUGGIERO. That's my sense, Senator. I read the executive summary of that report this morning and from everyone that I talk to in southern Afghanistan, from government officials at the district level to the provincial level to Afghans on a daily basis, I do not get the sense that there is great support or even limited support for the Taliban and what the Taliban has to offer.

In general, the Taliban, what they do offer in terms of services are a crude brutal form of justice and that is something that Afghans will generally gravitate toward because it is a dispute resolution process that the Taliban offers.

The Taliban offers nothing else. They offer no services. They offer no sense of security. So when we go in there and do basic counter-insurgency operations, which is to help the Afghan Government at the district and provincial level deliver basic services to the Afghan people, we generally find a pretty receptive audience, once the security conditions are set, that people can take part in the programs that we're offering through the government.

The CHAIRMAN. When you analyze our policy there and as we led up to the sort of new strategy and its implementation, there was a lot of debate about nation-building and the fundamental decision was made: we are not going to engage in "nation-building."

On the other hand, it seems to me that we are doing some local community-building which is not unlike nation-building but it's just—it's sort of local to an area. I don't know how we could do what we say we're trying to do which is stand up a government, provide some services, get some jobs, give them some schooling, you know, do the things necessary, without providing some of the resources to do that.

I assume you all agree with that and, therefore, it begs the question, Are we providing enough? Do we have the sufficient civilian

component here to wrap up what you folks in the military have, kind of, set the stage for adequately? What's your judgment about that, General?

General NICHOLSON. Sir, first, I agree that an amount of building of capacity is absolutely essential to the outcome, and I'll just go back to that Coin model. This connection between the population and the government is about transparency. It's about delivery of basic services. It's about a degree of accountability. So those dimensions must be there or we won't connect them to their government.

So the art of this, as you mentioned, is how to build that capacity. We were discussing Greg Mortonson's work before. Education is certainly a key component there in a country with the majority of the population under the age of 17. The education of the next generation who will be those capable leaders and serving in the military and the civil service and so forth is absolutely essential. So yes, sir, that is required.

One of the challenges is the fielding of district level governance capacity from two dimensions. One, the available pool of Afghans able to do that and willing to do that, to go to some of these more difficult areas and serve, so incentivizing that is important, and then identifying and recruiting those folks is extremely important.

The CHAIRMAN. You want to add to that?

Mr. RUGGIERO. I do. I don't think we're involved in nation-building in the grand Wesvalian sense. What we are doing is using the resources provided to build enough Afghan capacity so that in a counterinsurgency fight we'll be able to transition, we'll be able to, first of all, allow the local Afghan Government to provide basic services to the people so that we can transition the authority that the coalition currently has to, first, the ANSF, the Afghan National Security Forces, and then to a district level government that can work with—and provincial level government—that can work with that Afghan National Security Force to take over the security responsibilities.

So we're using our resources in a very targeted way to create some very basic structures that will allow the governance aspect to exist.

The CHAIRMAN. Underneath all of that, I wonder if, given the complaints of some of the folks as expressed in that survey which is not obviously the gospel with respect to all of this, but it's a guidepost, if we wouldn't—if we shouldn't consider some other kinds of programs or approaches, to wit, make sure that there is a sufficient level of refugee assistance which, I think, was not necessarily present in Marjah, go so far as to actually offer—that we would offer—we would help the local government to offer marriage and land allowances which seems to me a pretty effective way to get young men focused on their personal lives rather than being lost to, perhaps, insurgency.

A third idea: work with the local religious leaders to renovate mosques, shrines, and to distribute the Koran which would show a respect for Islam and something that would resonate with the local populous. I am told that it's a big deal in local culture if you actually own a Koran. I think it would be something.

If we were to offer food aid, particularly in the harsh summer and winter months when the water problems or the winter prob-

lems are the toughest, and even consider poppy production in terms of controlled medicine pilot projects where it's medically related as a way to kind of break through on the narcotics issue but still have some connection to the local needs.

I mean, I think there are ways like that that we could be more proactive and localized, I guess is the way I'd put it. What do you think of that?

Mr. RUGGIERO. Again, I read the report this morning and some of the points in that report were actually very accurate and raise some interesting points.

In terms of the overall report, I would echo what General Nicholson said earlier, that we're very early in this campaign in Marjah. I think we're at about 90 now or we're approaching day 90.

I would point to Arghandab, which the Striker Brigade cleared last summer in Kandahar. That was in August and September 2009. They took significant casualties. It was unstable for a period of time throughout the fall.

I think if you go to Arghandab now, and many of the members have actually been out there, you'll see a place where we're having fairly good success in terms of doing hold and build. So we are hiring a lot of people. We—not we. We are doing through the Afghan Government. In particular, there's an agricultural program called the Afghan Vouchers Program.

We have had up to 40,000 people that we've given some form of livelihood through that program and again this was funded by the Congress at \$360 million. This program's having a great effect. We're just rolling that program out now in Marjah. Our implementing partner is going into Marjah, I think, in the past couple weeks.

The Taliban understands that we have this program. They target this implementing partner. They blew up their facilities in Lashkar Gah. They target their employees that travel the road from Lashkar Gah out to Marjah.

So in terms of the report saying we should offer additional things, I think we've tried to come up with some very creative things with the support of the Congress.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me just interrupt you 1 minute. Our vote has started. I'm going to go vote, try and get back as fast as I can. Senator Lugar, if you would continue. We'll try to make it uninterrupted, if we can, and I'll try to get back as fast as I can.

Senator LUGAR. All right. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. Go ahead. Finish up your answer.

Mr. RUGGIERO. Thank you. On the refugees question, we worked very closely with Governor Mangal, the Governor of Helmand, to make sure that there were a various range of programs in place if there were a large refugee flow out of Marjah.

During the actual operation, the Afghan National Government came to the decision that was relayed to the local people to tell them not to leave their homes, to remain in their homes and that the coalition would take great care to make sure that collateral damage was minimized, and I think the U.S. military did an outstanding job in that regard.

Let me go back one second to the refugee question. There was some reports earlier this week that recently people have been flee-

ing Marjah and we have checked. I have two or three State Department—I actually have five State Department people on the ground in Marjah and I've gone back to all of them and they've gone and talked to their military counterparts and they could not substantiate those reports that people are in fact leaving.

On the poppy question, I think we have been very concerned that the first action of the Afghan Government when it has extended to Marjah, that the first thing it did—we wanted to make sure the first thing it does is not to wipe out someone's livelihood for the upcoming harvest. So we were careful not to do—we don't do eradication any longer but the report was skeptical, I think, in that it suggested that we did do eradication. In fact, we have not in Marjah.

Senator LUGAR. Thank you very much, sir. Let me give portions of the opening statement that I would have made if I had been prompt this morning. They will set the stage for some of our additional questioning.

The Marjah offensive, launched in February of this year, was the first phase of a joint counterinsurgency strategy between Afghanistan and the International Security Assistance Force. General McChrystal has said that soldiers are being positioned to wage a summertime operation intended to push the Taliban from their home turf in Kandahar where the insurgent movement sustains itself.

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

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

A key to the President's strategy is shifting responsibility to Afghan institutions is the Transfer element of Clear-Hold-Build-Transfer. That means there must be Afghan Security Forces and Afghan civil servants who are able to accept responsibility and to operate effectively.

Thus far, the Afghan National Army appears to be a relatively positive force. Yet despite partnering with ISAF Forces in recent operations, it is evident that the Afghan Army is still ill-prepared to lead. Meanwhile, raising the capabilities of the Afghan National Police is proving a difficult challenge for international police training experts.

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

While there are commitments to train more than a thousand persons a month, the reality is that such training will be limited and spreading the personnel effectively across Afghanistan will be a daunting challenge. I make these points to outline the importance of setting and then meeting appropriate expectations.

Building security forces to the level of several hundred thousand does not, in and of itself, guarantee order and discipline. Nor does populating districts with civil servants mean that basic services will be delivered. Some observers suggest much larger forces may be necessary, but that the burden might well prove to be too great for both Afghans and the international community.

Sustainable progress will require some political resolution as well as committed Afghan partners capable of turning local and national institutions into responsive entities for the Afghan people. I look forward, as you are, compatriots on the committee, to hearing from each of you and in subsequent rounds I will hear more from you, but for the moment, I'll ask that we recess the committee. Pending the return of our chairman, we'll be in recess for a few minutes while the vote continues.

Thank you.

[Recess.]

Senator KAUFMAN. The wonders of the Senate. Sometimes you feel absolutely Pavlovian. Bell rings, you go.

Really pleased to have you here today. Obviously there's nothing we're doing that's more important than Afghanistan because we have our wonderful, wonderful, wonderful troops in harm's way and trying to get to the bottom of how to do this, and I think we're doing a great job in Afghanistan in a very difficult situation.

Obviously we left and came back a couple times and it makes everything that we do over there so much more difficult. We've got the right people over there, I think, and we're doing a great job.

I'd like to kind of spend a couple minutes, obviously I've talked about this a little bit, and I think the key points are what you all said but, General, you know, really talking about the build phase. It's not the U.S. versus the Taliban. I think one of the biggest problems we have in this town is we kind of start just morphing into the what can we do to make the people like us as opposed to what can we do to make the government.

As you said, the key thing when you get to the build phase is how do you connect with the government, not our government, how to connect with their government, and how much of this, you know, report about short-term happiness, unhappiness, I'd like you to comment on how much do you think is just caused by the people's terrible experience with the government before, not that they dislike the Taliban, all the data shows that, they really don't like the Taliban, but when you look at it in the context, as you said, General, that it's really the government versus the Taliban we're talking about, how much do you think of the bad vibes or problem we're having, people may be joining the Taliban is based on the people in Marjah's experience with the government before the Taliban came in?

General NICHOLSON. Yes, sir. I mean, as you pointed out, the enemy is not popular. He's dangerous but he's not popular, and one of the other dimensions to Central Helmand is this nexus between

the enemy and the criminal element and so the narcotraffickers, the drug trafficking organizations, and the enemy together have combined to create a set of conditions there, as well.

Senator KAUFMAN. Can I just stop for one second and just ask you? Isn't there kind of a connect between the government and the criminal element? I mean, this is not like we've got the Taliban and the criminal element on this side and the government on the other side and especially when you think about Marjah pre-Taliban.

I mean, isn't it a problem for us—not a problem for us, for the government because they're identified with them?

General NICHOLSON. Yes, sir. There are linkages between in terms of government corruption, criminal elements and insurgency and the nexus of all these various threads is something we're working hard to identify and then to introduce accountability and to counter that.

Senator KAUFMAN. But specifically in Marjah, and this is good, I mean, because we can sit here and talk about Afghanistan, but trying to hone in on Marjah, I think this is a good example. I mean, clearly, the criminal elements were almost in charge of Marjah before the Taliban—the Taliban kind of came. They didn't like the Taliban, but then to a certain extent the Taliban saved the local populous from the local criminals.

General NICHOLSON. Sir, I'll give you one concrete data point in this. When the Marines moved into Marjah with the Afghan National Army and, of course, Governor Mangal's team right on their heels, one of the first things they did was to remove the police force from Marjah. This is the Afghan Government Police——

Senator KAUFMAN. Right.

General NICHOLSON [continuing]. Were removed and replaced by the Afghan National Civil Order Police who have greater credibility——

Senator KAUFMAN. Right.

General NICHOLSON [continuing]. And are viewed as more objective and capable by the people.

So in the initial shuras that were held and, Frank, I'll defer to you because you were at those shuras, but this was one of the chief complaints and so getting to your point about dissatisfaction with the government, the police in Marjah was one of the key elements of alienating the people from their own governments.

So yes, that was key, and it was addressed specifically in the planning and now, of course, the recruitment and the training of a new police force to come in to Marjah and then be partnered with the ISAF and ISAF elements in there will be essential, we view, toward facilitating this linkage, you know, between the people of Marjah and the larger Nadali District and their own government.

So absolutely, there are connections there and where we identify them, as in this case with the police, then we address them quite directly, but that requires commitment on the part of the Afghan Government which we have in the form of Governor Mangal and on the part of President Karzai who approved the operation and issued presidential directives for much of these activities to take place.

Senator KAUFMAN. I know Mr. Ruggiero's anxious to speak, but the point is that there will be reason for the people in Marjah not

to be happy—maybe happy to see us show up but not really happy to have a new government show up, is that fair to say? A concern?

Frank, you were there for the whole thing.

Mr. RUGGIERO. I think that's absolutely fair. When we went in to Marjah after the military cleared it, we had—we sat down and talked with many government officials and local people and the message was very clear that they gave to us, which was if you are here as the coalition to bring back the police force that was here before, we will go back and support the Taliban.

It was the message that was given to us. It was the message that was given to the Afghan Government. So as General Nicholson said, the planning called for when you put a new police force into Marjah, you could not try to resurrect that old police force but you were going to—what they pulled was the Afghan National Civil Order Police and that is the police force that currently is controlling Marjah.

There will be an effort to train up a new police force not from that local area that will go in, but your point's absolutely right.

Senator KAUFMAN. And it's not a trivial problem. I mean, it's at the heart—I mean, it's not—it is the problem. I mean, the people's experience with the government, their concern about what they see happening in Kabul, it all affects how they feel, whether it's positive or negative, that when we showed up.

Mr. RUGGIERO. Yes, and in a counterinsurgency fight, you're basically trying to win it. There's an argument going on between the government and the insurgents for the people's loyalty.

If the first reaction or the first instance you have of connection with your government is a corrupt police force or a police force that, in the instance of Marjah, was harmful to the people, you cannot win that counterinsurgency fight in that particular area. So that we addressed that right off the bat when we brought in the NKAM.

Senator KAUFMAN. Can you express in the same area the conflict between trying to eradicate narcotics but at the same time trying to win the hearts and minds of the people in the area?

General NICHOLSON. Sir, in early 2009 we went through a reconsideration of the counternarcotics approach in southern Afghanistan and up until that time eradication, what was really United States-funded eradication, effort was ongoing in Helmand. There also has always been a governor-led eradication effort underway.

We have shifted away from that U.S.-funded centrally led eradication effort to focusing more on alternative livelihoods and a heavier interdiction effort and we've seen success with this approach thus far. It's beginning, and we're obviously watching this very closely, but to get to your point, yes, the logic would be that we interdict the drug trafficking organizations with the Government of Afghanistan Special Interdiction Forces which are trained and mentored by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency and also some of our allies, so a heavy focus on the drug trafficking organizations and their interdiction and then in secured areas, like Marjah is now, we, through the Afghan Government, reach out to them and offer alternatives to help them transition from poppy to licit agriculture.

So this is the new approach. We're watching it very closely to see the effects on cultivation and the effects on the drug trafficking organizations.

Senator KAUFMAN. Mr. Ruggiero.

Mr. RUGGIERO. I think that's correct. Our focus now is no longer on eradication because that inevitably harms the local farmer who you're trying to win over in that contest with the Taliban for support of the government.

What we do focus on now is interdiction and alternative livelihoods. So we have a series of programs. I mentioned this Afghan Vouchers Program and Agricultural Program that is specifically designed to provide Afghan farmers input so they move away from poppy production, and I think we've seen some level of progress in poppy production thus far. In Helmand last year, according to the United Nations, poppy production had fallen by about 30 percent.

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

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning. Thank you all for your service. It's very nice to see you in D.C., General Nicholson.

I want to follow up a little bit on some of the things that Senator Kaufman was talking about. As I'm sure you remember, one of the people we met with on our visit to Helmand was Governor Mangal and he got very good reviews from folks we had talked to and was very impressive.

I wonder if you could talk about whether you think he's able, given all of the constraints, to make progress there and what the role that he and some of the other local officials are playing and whether that's positive and have they been integrated into the effort that we're working on with the Central Government or are they operating independently. Either one of you or both.

Mr. RUGGIERO. I would just make a couple comments to start.

The planning for Marjah was really the first integrated planning process that we did with the Afghans that went from the district level to the provincial level where Governor Mangal sits all the way up to the national level.

We developed the plans for Marjah in coordination with the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Defense, and those Ministers of the National Government in Kabul, particularly Minister Atmar of Interior and Minister Wordek at Defense.

The actual plans on the ground were developed with the local A&A and the A&P commanders. They went to Kabul with the Commander of RC-South. They briefed the Security Shura which is the ministry-level bureaucracy in Kabul. They then briefed President Karzai. President Karzai authorized the authorization.

I think we in RC-South felt that we had to get the political context right in order for Marjah to be effective. So again, President Karzai came down before the operation began. The plan was briefed to President Karzai. His ministers played an active role in making sure the forces were available and the resources.

So I think in terms of planning and what Governor Mangal did, he did that in very, very close cooperation with the National Government.

General NICHOLSON. Ma'am, if I could comment. Good to see you again, ma'am.

Governor Mangal, in my opinion, is one of the better governors in Afghanistan, if not the best, and I had the opportunity to work with him in 2006 and 2007 in RC-East where he was Governor of Paktika and Laghman provinces and then worked with him again in Helmand province, which is arguably one of the most difficult provinces in Afghanistan.

So my first point about Governor Mangal would be to me he's representative of the caliber that we see of some of the Afghan leaders who truly want this to be successful, want to see their governments succeed, and it's individuals like Governor Mangal and my personal contacts with him over the last 4 years that have reinforced in me the belief that this is doable, that because there are enough Afghans like him that want this to succeed for them, not us to succeed but them to succeed to make this attainable.

Specific examples of his leadership and the difference it's made. I mentioned the Food Zone Program, as he calls it, which is really focused on this transition from poppy to licit agriculture. His important parts of the Food Zone Program, we talked about interdiction, we talked about alternative livelihoods, we talked about the eradication component, but other critical components that he's taken on his own initiative are the outreach to the local population, the shuras that he holds in every district to talk about poppy and talk about why it is better for them as a society to move away from poppy and to move to licit agriculture.

He's harnessed the power of the religious Yulima of Helmand against narcotics and incorporates Mullahs and religious scholars into these discussions. So his outreach to the people of Helmand goes beyond the specific programs. It really is getting to the intangibles of this and trying to restore normalcy and sustainable licit economy to the region and so these are things that, of course, we cannot do, that they must do for themselves and so watching him as a leader take those steps to—and in so doing pitting himself against some very wealthy and powerful narcotrafficking organizations and to do that even though there's been well over half a dozen attempts on his life in this most recent job, again gives me great confidence that the individuals like him, if supported properly, can move this thing forward.

Senator SHAHEEN. And is he getting support from the central government in those efforts? I appreciate that you explained that they were involved in developing the strategy for Marjah, but on those kinds of outreach initiatives, the efforts to turn things around, is the central government supportive? Are they an impediment or are they irrelevant?

Mr. RUGGIERO. I think in the instance of Marjah, the central government was critical to the planning and the availability of resources on the Afghan side. The Independent Director for Local Governance, the Minister that's in charge of Subnational Governance in Afghanistan, came to Marjah and to Helmand at least four, five, or six times. His objective was to help Governor Mangal create

local governance capacity which is a real challenge in southern Afghanistan and across Afghanistan.

Senator SHAHEEN. right.

Mr. RUGGIERO. But in the end, what we've ended up seeing is that, at least in Marjah, you're starting to see some level of governance capacity develop. I think as of last count there are about 16 members of the district government team in Marjah itself which is for southern Afghanistan fairly large. So from my experience of working with the Afghans on the planning for Marjah, I think the central government played a very important and critical role.

Senator SHAHEEN. And I'm almost out of time, so maybe I should save this question, but as you're thinking about lessons from Marjah that can be used as we're looking at what needs to be done in Kandahar, are there particular things that you observed that we've experienced that we think are important as we're looking at what needs to be done in Kandahar?

General NICHOLSON. Ma'am, and I'm sure Frank has many lessons, as well, this methodology of briefing the operation all the way up to the central government level, seeking Presidential endorsement and leadership and then his personal involvement in the shuras and his guidance to his ministers, the focusing of the ministries on the local level, it was an important lesson and has led to some of the advances that we've made down there.

Mr. RUGGIERO. I think the primary lesson learned on the governance side again recognizes the limiting factor of Afghan capacity. There were plans in place early on to try to get a lot of Afghan Government capacity into Marjah very quickly. That did not happen as fast as we would like.

So we've worked with Minister Popal of the Subnational Governance Ministry basically and we're trying to—for Kandahar, we're going to try to prioritize which positions we want to see filled at the district level first and we can get to the larger—it's called the Tashkil which is a manning document. Later on, as resources permit, but we need to prioritize to get those key ministry officials down to the district level as soon as possible.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Mr. SEDNEY. If I could just add one other lesson learned. About 3 weeks ago, the three of us were in Kabul at a meeting led by Ambassador Holbrooke and General Petraeus reviewing the progress of the civil-military operations and a number of Afghan ministers were there and talking about the Marjah operation.

Several of the ministers pointed out that one of the lessons they had learned is to question their own assumptions, that their assumptions about what they expected when Marjah happened turned out not to be right, and that they were going to learn in the future to question their assumptions and reach out more to the people at the local level rather than relying on people at intermediate levels, and I thought that was a very important lesson that the Afghan Government officials had learned.

Senator SHAHEEN. That's great. Thank you, all.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Feingold.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, General Nicholson and Mr. Ruggiero, for being here today and, Mr.

Chairman, thank you for continuing your efforts to ensure that Congress and the American people are fully aware of the status of our efforts in Afghanistan.

It's too early to judge the long-term effects of the offensive in Marjah but already there are reports that the Taliban are once again asserting their presence there. I question how well we can "clear" areas when Taliban fighters meld into local populous and "hold" them in a sustainable manner when regular police forces are perceived to be either corrupt or unreliable.

Moreover, the Afghan Government's rampant corruption and the disaffection among the population in the South are not going to be fixed by the arrival of an additional 30,000 American troops in Afghanistan.

So obviously I think we have to ask whether a massive open-ended military presence that has already increased United States and Afghan civilian casualties and cost tens of billions of dollars makes sense. Our troops will no doubt do everything that we ask of them and will be successful tactically, but the question is whether the strategy our government has adopted is actually going to make our country safer. I am not convinced that that's the case.

The time has come, in my view, to set a timetable for responsibly drawing down our troops so we can focus on pursuing a sustainable global strategy to combat al-Qaeda.

I'll turn to some questions. General Nicholson, Secretary Clinton has testified that we anticipate that it will take 3 to 5 years to transition control to Afghan security forces, but press reports on Marjah raised questions about Afghan Army combat performance, readiness, and discipline.

By your estimate, how many years will it take to completely transfer control to Afghan security forces in RC-South if we continue to pursue the current strategy?

General NICHOLSON. Well, sir, I'd ask that we use the process that Secretary Gates and with the President have devised to assess this. Our goal right now is to introduce the forces, execute the campaign.

We're about halfway through the introduction of those forces. In December of this year to assess where we are on the strategy and then from there make those kinds of judgments that you're asking for.

Senator FEINGOLD. But would you agree with Secretary Clinton's assessment of 3 to 5 years?

General NICHOLSON. Sir, I mean, this will take a period of time. For example, President Karzai at the London Conference said he would like to take over security responsibilities for the entire country within a 5-year framework. We support that goal.

Our already approved and funded growth of the Afghan National Security Forces carries us through to the end of 2011. So clearly there will be an effort there to continue to grow those forces. So in that window of 3 to 5 years that she talked about is the time-frame that we're talking about in terms of the growth of their security forces and the ability of them to take over the fight.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you, General. Mr. Ruggiero and General Nicholson, the Christian Science Monitor reported that one of the factors that enabled the Taliban to take hold in Marjah was the

abusive rule of warlords who are now apparently actually seeking a place in the new government as well, including by lobbying in Kabul.

I'm concerned, as others are, that President Karzai is not serious about working to address the warlordism that has alienated the population in the south. His recent support for an amnesty law that gives immunity from prosecution to warlords would seem to, you know, sort of cast that into further doubt.

Do you share those concerns, Mr. Ruggiero?

Mr. RUGGIERO. In terms of the Marjah operation, I think the concern you express is accurate, that in fact there was a local police force that was in Marjah prior to 2008 that had conducted itself in a manner, and it was linked to local power brokers, that did open the door for the Taliban to go back into Marjah and take control. In fact, they did do that in 2008.

In the planning efforts again to secure Marjah, we were very clear to work with the central government, to work with the official representation of the government, so with the ministry levels in Kabul, with Governor Mangal in Helmand itself and with the district government officials and the local A&A officials.

Again, recognizing that the police issue was a problem in Marjah, we did not go back to the police officials that had existed prior to the Taliban taking over in 2008. A different force was brought in, Afghan National Civil Order Police. This was to address that linkage between the police force that had been there and local power brokers.

Senator FEINGOLD. General, do you share these concerns?

General NICHOLSON. Yes, sir. As Frank mentioned, the police in Marjah were predatory, not protecting the population, and this was one of the principal complaints of the people, and to the extent that that's a reflection of some nongovernmental actor or governmental actor who is acting in a way that's not consistent with support for the people, they were present in Marjah.

But as Mr. Ruggiero pointed out, one of our first acts upon securing Marjah was to remove that police force and replace them with the more credible and capable Afghan National Civil Order Police and then begin a process of recruiting and training a new police force and that in fact is what's occurring now.

Senator FEINGOLD. General and Mr. Ruggiero, have we seen any interest in Taliban reintegration as a result of Operation Moshtarak?

Mr. RUGGIERO. Well, reintegration in Afghanistan is an Afghan-led process and reintegration is designed to go after those low-level and mid-level fighters that are willing to come off the battlefield.

We had been waiting for the Afghan Government to put out its interim guidance which President Karzai authorized in the past week or so. We have not seen large numbers of integration of the mid-fighter level. I think the security situation would be key first. I mean, people are making a decision, do I think the government's going to win here, do I think the Taliban's going to win?

So in Marjah, I don't think we've hit that tipping point from the security perspective that you'd see a large number of reintegrees, but what you do see, and this is a theme that you see throughout the areas we've cleared since July of last year, is that when we

come in with the military and due cash for work programs, for example, there's an unemployment rate in southern Afghanistan that's 60-some percent and oftentimes the Taliban will recruit simply on an economic basis to get people to come out, plant an idea, take a couple shots with an AK-47.

You will see those people working on these programs that the U.S. Agency for International Development puts out so that those low-level fighters almost do an instantaneous reintegration where they now have employment opportunities, they take advantage of the programs we are offering.

What we haven't seen yet, though, is that mid-level commander coming in with maybe 50 or 60 fighters in the Marjah area. I think you'll see that, though, when the security situation improves and now that we have the Afghan guidance on it.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thanks to both of you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Senator Feingold.

Senator Cardin.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I certainly appreciate our witnesses being here today.

Let me talk a little bit about the poppy and drug trade. According to the United Nations, no country in the world has ever produced narcotics at the deadly rate that's been done in Afghanistan and I understand the strategies about trying to have substitute crops and the eradication program not being successful.

Can you just share with us the impact of the Marjah campaign on the drug production in that region and whether we have had success in substituting crops, whether the bottom line production of poppy crop has been reduced and what the prognosis is for the future?

General NICHOLSON. Yes, sir. And the overall approach, as you highlighted, was a shift from centralized eradication to an effort focused on interdiction of the drug trafficking organizations and we estimate there's about half a dozen of these major drug trafficking organizations in southern Afghanistan and then in secured areas assisting the farmers to transition from poppy to licit agriculture.

So this is the fundamental approach. That approach is reinforced and I should mention the governor in southern Afghanistan or in Helmand province, Governor Mangal, has a program, a counter-narcotics program, completely led by his government, called the Food Zone Program, which involves an information component and an outreach to the population on the desire of having licit agricultural economy vice a poppy-based one.

It invokes religious leaders to discuss about opium vis-a-vis Islam and it involves a component of eradication. So there's still eradication led by the Afghan Government but only when—after he's made the offer to citizens to transition and he offers them assistance with weed, seed, and agricultural assistance. If they still choose to plant poppy in spite of that offer, then he goes in and conducts governor-led eradication. So there's a multidimensional effort ongoing in these areas.

The significance of our operations in southern Afghanistan this year, as you point out, sir, is that southern Afghanistan produces

the majority of the opium in the country. The country produces over 90 percent of the opium in the world.

The area of Central Helmand is one of the most densely cultivated areas in Afghanistan and it's primarily producing opium right now. So as we secure areas, we have found these programs that the governor is leading are more successful in secured areas. In insecure areas, they have little success.

So as we extend security to the population of Central Helmand, we anticipate greater success in terms of the effects of these programs.

As to the specific success we've seen, Frank, I know you've got some recent observations on that.

Mr. RUGGIERO. I'll just give a quick anecdote on a conversation I had in Marjah about 15 days after the military operations had kicked off.

President Karzai had come down with General McChrystal to do a shura and they did it in a local mosque and I couldn't attend because it was in the mosque. So I sat outside with a bunch of—maybe about 20 or 30 farmers who were anywhere from the age of 20 to 40 and that was the only—the question they had on their mind was what are you going to do about our poppy crop. A lot of them will plant many types of crops, but they'll plant a little bit of poppy so they have a cash crop available to them, and I think the general theme was don't come in and eradicate the poppy because you'll lose the support of the people very quickly.

I think that's what we've learned from a more broader perspective, that the eradication effort from a counterinsurgency point of view was not successful. So we have implemented a series of programs on interdiction, alternative livelihoods that I think, as General Nicholson said, the general theory is that in unsecured areas equal more poppy cultivation, the more secure an area becomes, the less poppy cultivation you have because the government is there; coalition forces are there.

Senator CARDIN. I agree with what you just said, and I imagine that the circumstances are better than they would otherwise been absent our efforts.

It would be helpful if we could quantitate that somehow. One of the things that we've been asking for in Congress is a way to judge progress and to the extent that you can document rather than just give individual stories, I think it would be helpful to us.

None of us expect overnight we're going to change or eliminate the illegal drugs coming out of Afghanistan, but we have to make progress and if you can demonstrate that, I think that would be helpful.

The followup question is one with this local governor's actions. It only can succeed if they eliminate corruption which is reported pretty widespread among government officials in Afghanistan.

Now we can talk about the centralized authority and the corruption problems within the central government. I'd like to get to the local community, particularly in the Helmand area, as to whether you have reason to believe that the programs that are being implemented locally with the local population are credible or whether they are just taking funds that otherwise could be used for the economic progress in that region and funding their corrupt activities.

Mr. RUGGIERO. I think you are correct in pointing out that corruption is a major issue across southern Afghanistan and Afghanistan generally. I think President Karzai has signed a draft—he's working on a draft executive order for an anticorruption decree that he released several months ago. We're doing a lot of work in Kabul on building the capability of the central government to address corruption issues. I can go into the specifics on those, if you like.

From the Regional-South perspective, over the past year we have started to see some activity in prosecuting corrupt actors. There's actually the head of the Afghan Border Police in Kandahar. If you control the roads in southern Afghanistan or the border crossing points, that's a way to make money, as you can imagine. He was arrested and he was just prosecuted, given a 10-year—an 8-year sentence and several hundred thousand dollar fine. So we are seeing some progress, nascent though it is, on the government prosecuting corruption cases.

Senator CARDIN. And I just—again, we're looking for progress and the way to start breaking corruption is to work with the local officials and to reward the community based upon progress being made and not being just taken for personal gain by a few, and it would be helpful—I know the efforts you're making with Mr. Karzai and we certainly are watching that very closely, and I would, not today, but appreciate the specific information that you're referring to, but it would also be helpful to know the efforts we're making at the local government levels.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Cardin. Mr. Sedney, what has the civilian leadership of the Defense Department gleaned from this process thus far? Are you folks satisfied with the resourcing as well as the partnership on the civilian side? If not, what do we need to do?

Mr. SEDNEY. I'd have to say at this point in terms of the cooperation, as laid out by Mr. Ruggiero and the cooperation both with the Afghan civilians and with the United States and international civilians, the Marjah operation has been exemplary in terms of that level of cooperation, starting in the planning period and continuing through now, that as soon as security was put in place, Frank was able to deploy civilians with our Marines and they became active right away.

USAID was able to come out and put programs into place again immediately after security was put in place and that's still ongoing right now. So we are learning lessons on how to do it well, but in terms of the level of cooperation, I'd say it's been exemplary.

You mentioned in your statement that this was the biggest military operation since 2001. I would add to that it's the biggest civil-military operation ever and that civil-military part of it is something that we will need to build on.

That said, we also are learning—

The CHAIRMAN. Is there any dramatic missteps that need to be cured or gaps that you think need to be filled as we, sort of now, look toward Kandahar and elsewhere?

Mr. SEDNEY. I think the biggest area, and we knew this going in, this would be the biggest area of problem and Mr. Ruggiero

mentioned it earlier, is the capacity of Afghan Government civilians to come in and carry out the local governance effort.

The number of those civilians, and General Nicholson mentioned this, too, who are trained, capable, and willing to go to those areas does not match at all the demand. We are working already with the Afghan Government. Director General Popal that Mr. Ruggiero mentioned has a training program that they're starting up to have for an accelerated training of local government officials but that is a serious area of concern for success in Marjah, success in Kandahar, success anywhere in Afghanistan, is Afghan civilian capacity.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Ruggiero, I know I promoted you earlier to Ambassador. I hope you can survive that down at the Department.

Mr. RUGGIERO. I appreciated that. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. I was just trying to help you out with Holbrooke when you go in there, you know, but maybe it has the opposite effect. I'll have to reexamine that one.

There are six key districts in Central Helmand River Valley that matter. You understand that. Marjah and Nadali sort of represented the last two that we needed to move in on, but we did—Garmsir and Naway, I guess, previously and that's had some time now to take hold.

When I was there, we did a shura with a lot of local leaders and I was struck by their anxiety over the need for just basics, you know: "We want water." "We want, you know, crops, different irrigation, different things like that."

Where do you think we are now with that? If we went back there and did an analysis, another shura, would they stand up and say the same thing or are they in a better place?

Mr. RUGGIERO. I think in places like Naway, Garmsir, Argindab, where we have been for roughly, at least in Naway and Argindab, about a year, Garmsir a little longer, I think if you ask the people are you in a better position vis-a-vis the government delivering some very basic rudimentary services, I think their answer would be "Yes," that they have received more service delivery from their local government.

A lot of that is based on the capability that we bring to the table, working at the district level. So that raises the question of transition. How do you transition out of this? But I think at this point they would probably say that they are—those basic needs are being met better than they were a year ago.

The CHAIRMAN. Are you doing that kind of analysis? I mean, are we in fact measuring that? Isn't that pretty important to keep track of?

Mr. RUGGIERO. It is. The way we have tried to—

The CHAIRMAN. Do we do that systematically?

Mr. RUGGIERO. The way we've tried to do it—we do do it systematically. The way we specifically try to do it in RC-South is we try to define what success at the district level looks like and we do that in terms of when we want to transition, what would be the hallmark of how we transition the governance side of the equation at the district level.

So you would need a district governor that works, that lives in the district center, refurbished district center. You'd need a local

representative shura that represents the vast majority of the people, villages in that district. You would need at least a handful of key ministry capabilities that would be in the district. You'd need an effective chief of police, district level chief of police. You would need an effective NDS, which is basically the Afghan National Intelligence Service.

When you have that capability, which is easily quantifiable, in the district, I think you have some basic level of—that would be what success looks like, I think, for us on the governance side.

The CHAIRMAN. Now, I mentioned earlier in my opening comments this issue of the refugees and obviously I think Governor Mangal was sort of put in charge of handling that with respect to Marjah and Nadali.

What—which in effect meant there wasn't a lot provided for them. I mean, I think that's the judgment people have come to. There are reports that the situation in Kandahar is becoming increasingly dangerous for civilians, and that the Taliban and criminal groups are assassinating and beating people publicly and basically trying to intimidate the population.

I also understand that our troops, you know, the NATO and ISAF troop presence is really in part being blamed for these attacks on civilians at this point in time and people are somewhat angry still about the perceived support of either our country or our troops, et cetera, for Hamad Karzai, et cetera.

Can you speak to his standing, No. 1, and to the civilian intimidation levels and sort of status of Kandahar without going into any aspects of our operations but just what is it today? What are we looking at?

Mr. RUGGIERO. The Taliban has unleashed a series—an assassination campaign inside of Kandahar City and these are literally two-motorcycle/two-men teams that go around the city to attempt—their objective is to assassinate Afghan Government officials.

I think the Taliban understands what our strategy is. Our strategy is to build the governance capacity of the Afghan Government and for it to be able to deliver some basic services.

So what they do is they target those Afghan officials that we're trying to bolster and they also target our implementing partners on the USAID side who really are the entity that help the government deliver services. So these assassination squads, there's bombings aimed at our implementing partners, they really are going after what they understand to be the key to our strategy and the key to the strategy again is to build the government up so that it can provide basic services in this fight between the insurgents and the government.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Lugar.

Senator LUGAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. According to recent ISAF figures, there are now estimated to be 113,000 trained Afghan National Army soldiers and 109,000 persons trained for service in the Afghan National Police.

What is your estimate of how many of those police and soldiers who have been trained still remain? The reason I ask is that there were fragmentary reports of training, particularly in the police area. Many of the persons being trained are illiterate and have real background difficulties. Additionally, many seem to have dis-

appeared or left the ANP, and I'm just curious as to how stable those figures are and whether they are accurate.

General NICHOLSON. Yes, sir. And at the SIBMIL Rock Drill that Mr. Sedney mentioned, we had discussion on this issue and Minister Atmar's comments regarding the police were illuminating.

As you mentioned in your remarks, sir—the Army—those are trained soldiers. However, the police do not—are not all trained yet. In fact, up to upward of 70 percent have not been trained. Minister Atmar expressed his concerns as he and Minister Wortek described their situation to General Petraeus and Ambassador Holbrooke.

Minister Atmar talked about the model in the police is not recruit, train, and deploy; rather, the soldiers—the police officers are already deployed but in many cases they don't have adequate training and equipping.

So it is a case of going out to that 70 percent of his force, bringing them back in for vetting, drug testing, some sort of background check to the extent that that's possible, and then training them for 8 weeks and then redeploying them out now as a trained police officer with a partnered unit and with a mentorship team, and this basic critical path of bringing in these police that are currently untrained, training them and redeploying them he views, and we agree, as essential to getting this capability up and reducing the attrition that you're referring to.

Another—two other data points I'd mention, sir. In December we saw some increases in pay offered and we've seen some very positive response in terms of retention and enlistment. In fact, we've exceeded most of our enlistment goals since these pay incentives have been introduced.

And the second thing, I just received a note from General Caldwell, the commander of our NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan, today and the pay-to-bank system where police officers, for example, have visibility of their pay being deposited and now they're doing an experimental program where this information is conveyed to them via text message on a cell phone and it enables them to have a greater degree of control over their pay.

He and his Afghan partners believe it has great potential to then reinforce—reduce absenteeism which in many cases is a result of a soldier must take his pay to his family somewhere else in the country and then return to duty.

The final piece on retention I'd mention, we've referred to the Afghan National Civil Order Police a couple of times as being the most effective and credible Afghan Police Force. They receive about a 16-week training program, highly trained and very effective, but we've had a high attrition in that force and we're addressing that through a number of ways.

One is the pay incentives I referred to. Another is an operational rotational cycle. That means that they're not continuously deployed for their entire enlistment. So they can count on a period of retraining, rest, and then being redeployed.

So this program, very comprehensive, is just getting underway and we view this as something that's going to reduce the attrition that we're seeing in our highest-quality police forces.

Senator LUGAR. Yes, sir.

Mr. SEDNEY. Senator, if I can add three points. First, Minister Atmar, with our cooperation, has put in place a program called the Personal Asset Inventory which has gone out and done biometrics, interviews, inventory of assets in order to see how much money people have, and it obviously has a corruption angle to it, as well.

But that combination of factors, they have as of the end of April, they had reached 90,000 of the 99,000 police who are on the rolls. That doesn't mean that those police are always there working every day, but it does mean that at least on one day they showed up and they got biometric information. We had the background information that will allow us to continue to monitor them.

Second, on the training and the performance of the police, we have trained many police and there are many police actually who are out there working effectively in Afghanistan as well as the corrupt ones that we hear so much about, and Minister Atmar was very articulate on that, and the police also suffer a higher casualty rate than the Afghan National Army. The casualty rate for the police, the attacks on the police are very high.

But going back to the performance and I'll follow up on the answer I gave to Senator Kerry in terms of challenges, in the end it doesn't matter how well we train the police, it doesn't matter how well we mentor, and it doesn't matter how well we partner. If you put police out into a system where rule of law and governance are corrupt, where there's a corrupt judge, a corrupt prosecutor, a corrupt corrections system, and a corrupt system around them, those police will become corrupt.

So we are working very hard to train the police, but it's a very difficult problem because it's not a one system. It's a system of systems that makes the police work.

And then, finally, one additional point on the ANCOP. While they have performed very well and are the leading edge of Afghan police, one contributing reason to that turnover that General Nicholson mentioned is they had never been partnered before and in the last month we have begun partnering the Afghan Civil Order Police with United States Special Forces and we believe that will also provide additional leadership and incentive to help reduce that turnover rate.

Senator LUGAR. Let me just comment that at least we're told that eventually we want to get to 170,000 Afghan National Army soldiers and 130,000 police officers.

Both of you have given excellent testimony as to the difficulties of this training and you have said you now have a good deal of information on 900,000 police officers through the Personal Asset Inventory Program. Maybe you are able to keep track of those.

But I'm wondering, first of all, the nature of the timeframe in which we get to somewhere in the range of the 170,000 and 130,000. This may be a more difficult question beyond any of our competence to answer now. But, this question will be increasingly asked by the American public.

Furthermore, I'm curious as to the costs we have and will continue to incur as we pursue these goals. How much of that cost can be borne by the Afghan Government in subsequent years?

When we had this discussion with regard to Iraq, it was always the promise of oil and/or other revenues covering the costs of such

operations if things could be pulled together. But in Afghanistan, there is not that kind of promise. As we have our timetables for potential withdrawal of American forces, the idea is clearly that in the event of the execution of these timetables there would be an Afghan Army and police officers to provide the civil government and the provincial governments with the sustained support necessary to ensure stability—but with what wherewithal?

What is the current level of dedicated funds, and how long can the American people sustain this level of funding, in your estimate, after our troops have left?

Mr. SEDNEY. Senator, that's an excellent question and one that we pay a lot of attention to.

First of all, you're right. The Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police currently are—the cost of those are borne almost exclusively by the international community, primarily by the United States, although a number of other nations contribute.

The Afghan contribution to their own security is in Afghan terms quite high. Of the approximately, I believe, \$1.3 billion in revenue of the Afghan National Government last year, they spent about 35 percent of that, actually closer to 40 percent of that, on supporting their own Afghan security forces. So 40 percent of their national revenue went to that.

However, that's well short of what it will cost to maintain the Army and the police forces that we have now and that we're building toward. So clearly there will be a need extending into the future for Afghanistan to receive continued support for the sustenance of those forces.

But I would point out that if you compare the costs of Afghan security forces to the cost of United States forces, any of our international partners, it is much, much less. So from that standpoint, having Afghan Security Forces in charge of security for their own country makes sense not just from a political and social point of view but also from an economic point of view.

Finally, I'd point out that Afghan Government revenues in the last year have gone up by 20 percent. There is a lot of economic potential in Afghanistan. It doesn't have the oil wealth in Iraq, but from minerals to manufacturing, there are large areas of economic hope for Afghanistan but that hope can only be enabled if we put the security into place that enables the economy to flourish.

Senator LUGAR. I appreciate that response. I'm hopeful that our government will begin to work with the Afghan Government on what would be called a business plan because, as you pointed out, there's economic growth occurring there for various reasons. Hopefully, we can see more of that. Otherwise I see a scenario down the trail where after the arduous training exercises and grassroots efforts you've described, the wherewithal to continue to pay for all of this will simply not be there. Then, at that point, we have a different set of problems.

Now we might rationalize that we're going to have to have security forces in Afghanistan perpetually. If the Afghans are not going to pay for it, we will have to, and it's better to pay for the use of Afghan forces than ours. However, whether that argument can be sustained if we were to have this hearing 5 years from now is a problematic issue. This is why we better, even as we're going

through the arduous training business, begin thinking through the business plan of how this is to be sustained.

I appreciate the thinking you've already given to this, but I would encourage a really great deal more.

Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Risch.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a question I'd like all three of you to comment on, if you would, briefly.

You know, I've never had any doubt that we could accomplish what we wanted to accomplish there; that is, with our objectives of standing up an Army, standing up a government, standing up a police, but when one travels over there and you talk to people, they tell you the right things, you listen to what they say, and it sounds good, but you get the queasy feeling that maybe they either aren't able to sustain it or they don't really have the same desire to sustain it that we as Americans do and setting it up is one thing. Sustainability is something else and I had no doubt that we'd get to where we wanted to be as far as standing it up, but I got to tell you, you come away from that with a really queasy feeling about their ability.

So I'd like maybe the three of you to comment on that.

Mr. RUGGIERO. I would just point to—I think your points are well taken. The question of sustainability and who do you transition to is the primary question you have to be able to answer over the next couple years.

I would point to the most recent operations, Marjah and what we're going to do in Kandahar. We've approached this in kind of a different way to make sure that this is an Afghan Government effort. This is the Afghan Government that is extending its authority over these areas that are either ungoverned as in Marjah or governed to a pretty negative degree where you have a Taliban infiltration presence.

The planning that's been done for a lot of these operations has been done in partnership with the Afghan Government. So I think we would take or I certainly take some comfort in the fact that we seem to have turned a corner in terms of how we do these operations and that these have to be the Afghan Government extending its authority with the assistance of the coalition.

I think in the past you had operations that weren't necessarily like that. I don't know if my colleagues want to comment.

General NICHOLSON. Sir, like Frank, your points are well taken and this will be an Afghan solution and certainly at the end of the day, they are the ones that have to restore some equilibrium to their society and it's not insignificant to consider, you know, they're on their fifth form of government in 30 years. They've had 30 years of war. The normal social governance mechanisms that have been resilient for centuries have been badly fractured by assassinations, by war, by criminal networks, by systems of patronage.

So this is, in many ways, a traumatized situation and so helping them gain the time to restore a balance is important. I'm encouraged personally, having spent parts of each of the last 4 years in Afghanistan, that there are enough Afghans who really want this to succeed that they can in fact arrive at a stable solution.

Specifically, we've talked a little bit about Governor Mangal here today, has been governor in three different provinces in Afghanistan. In each of those provinces he's brought systems and capabilities that weren't there before and restored the credibility of the government to some extent.

We see tribes and this perhaps is one of the dangers of over-focusing on certain of the more difficult areas, like Marjah, and seeing all of Afghanistan through the lens of Marjah as opposed to looking at some of the other areas and the one I'd mention would be Nangarhar province, in the east, a Pashtun area, certainly a problematic area. It was the last place that some of the al-Qaeda elements in Afghanistan were.

The province itself is enjoying tremendous prosperity because of increased trade with Pakistan through the Torcum Gab Kyber Pass area. Recently, the Shinwari Tribe, one of the largest tribes, I believe the largest tribe in Nangarhar, made a public declaration against the Taliban but also one that asserted they wanted to see less government corruption.

So this tribal declaration was very interesting because it is not just about an individual, like a qualified governor or a qualified military commander. It's about an entire tribe of significance taking a stand against the enemy but also identifying what they expect out of their own government. So it is data points like those that have given me the belief that the Afghans can do this and certainly I've had plenty of moments, as you have experienced, sir, where you wonder how a particular situation is going to turn out, no question about it.

Helping them and giving them the space and time to work through this and then assistance in key areas is critical, though the one comment I'd make, and Senator Kerry and I were discussing Greg Mortenson's work prior to the hearing, education is extremely important across Afghan society.

We've had a real focus on primary education. There is a need for secondary, vocational, and higher education to help them grow the human capacity to enable them to move forward as a society and there's a real desire to embrace that.

So I just wanted to mention that, but I share your concerns, sir, but I also have, just based on personal contacts with the Afghans, do believe they can do this and that they want to do this and that there is a critical mass of Afghans that really want this for their society, enough so to make this happen.

Mr. SEDNEY. Senator, I've shared your concerns and been even more worried. I've been involved in our Afghan efforts since 2002 when I went out as the Embassy dechargé and deputy chief of mission and have been working on Afghanistan in a number of capacities since then.

Over those 8 years I have at times shared the doubts that you have. However, I would say today I am more optimistic than I've ever been about the future of Afghanistan and it goes to many of the factors that Mr. Ruggiero and General Nicholson mentioned to you, as well.

And, first of all, it is the continued effort by Afghans and ranging from ministers in Kabul to governors to people at the national governance and districts, as well, where there are many areas of fail-

ure, there are also many and, I believe, growing areas of success and the dedication of those, and next week when President Karzai comes, he'll bring a number of ministers that I'm sure all of you have met who have been there for years who have dedicated their lives to moving forward and I believe that together with them we are.

But even more than that, General Nicholson mentioned education. Eight years ago there were no girls and very few boys in school. Eight years later with that focus on primary education, when I've gone back to Afghanistan, I've talked to the people who are 13-14-year-olds now, who have gone through that education. Their vision for themselves, their hope for themselves is not to become Taliban extremists. They want to become engineers. They want to become doctors. They want to become lawyers.

So we have literally millions of young people who are the future of Afghanistan and that is something that I find is both inspiring and impressive and it is a hope that I believe will be fulfilled with the leadership that we mentioned before, the assistance from the international community but, most of all, by the hard work of the Afghans themselves.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I certainly hope that your optimism, all three of you, comes to fruition.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Senator Risch.

Senator Shaheen, do you have any more questions?

Senator SHAHEEN. I do. I want to go back to a couple of things that have been raised by others with respect to the potential for reintegrating some of the Taliban.

As we're looking at Kandahar and that as the home of President Karzai, the place where he probably has or one would think he has as much influence as anywhere in the country, is this an opportunity to begin to look at potential reintegration there and is that being discussed as part of the strategy for how we turn around Kandahar?

Mr. RUGGIERO. As I said earlier, Senator, I don't think you were in the room, I apologize for that, the reintegration guidance is really an Afghan-led effort and President Karzai's administration just cleared off on that guidance and that guidance will have to come down their chain of command to the provincial governor in Kandahar to the mayor to the district governors because it will really be them that will lead any effort on reintegration in the upcoming Kandahar operations.

I would suspect that there will be opportunities for reintegration in the areas that are most kinetic at this point. So you have parts of Kandahar that are generally controlled by the Taliban, not in the city itself but in the districts that matter to the west of the city. So I would not be surprised to see some reintegration opportunities in those districts.

Senator SHAHEEN. Anybody have anything to add to that?

General NICHOLSON. I would just agree with Frank and would add that reintegration is really a part of the Afghan tradition and again I mentioned this while you were out of the room, ma'am, but when you look at the government and the army and the police today, you see many cases where you've got former mujahideen and

former Communists now together in the government, in the same ministry, in the same military unit working together toward a more stable and prosperous Afghanistan.

So the notion of reintegrating at the upset brothers, as they refer to them, is something that's very much within their tradition and attainable.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. When we were there last year with a group of Senators, one of the acknowledgements was the fact that there are a number of NATO partners in this effort and there are different teams in various parts of the country in charge of the PRTs and that their approach is not always the same.

What kinds of steps have been taken to better coordinate the approaches and all of those PRTs and the efforts that we're engaging in with our NATO allies?

Mr. RUGGIERO. At the Kabul level, Ambassador Mark Sedwell has been appointed as the senior NATO civilian in Afghanistan. Mark is the former British Ambassador to Afghanistan. So his position, his taking that NATO position will be very helpful in terms of coordinating U.S.—I'm sorry—international civilian assistance.

What you had happen in the south because of the large American inflow of civilians is that what were once a Canadian PRT in Kandahar, Dutch PRT in Orizkon, British PRT in Helmand, we have put so many American civilians in those places and then further down range at the district level, that those are in fact now international PRTs. So the level of control—control is probably the wrong word. The level of coordination that you have to meet the military and civilian objectives across the PRTs is far greater than it was a year ago.

Senator SHAHEEN. And I certainly applaud the appointment of the civilian coordinator. I think that's a wonderful step forward and very much appreciate that.

I want to go back to the metrics issue and measures and you all have talked about a number of ways that we're looking at determining whether success is happening on the ground.

Do we have, I don't want to say a list, but essentially I guess that's what I'm asking. Is there a list of what we look at specifically? So for Marjah, when we said, OK, we've cleared the Taliban of Marjah. Are there a list of factors that we use to determine specifically whether there's enough security in place to be able to say that, and as we think about holding an area, again is there—are there specific measures that we look at and say, OK, we're now in a position to move to the next phase, and is that something that is shared with everybody?

One of the things that raised this question for me was reading a recent Time Magazine piece about the effort to rebuild is at the Peer Mohammed School outside of—

Mr. RUGGIERO. Yes, it was the Joe Klein piece on Zhari.

Senator SHAHEEN. Yes. I was particularly interested because the captain had gone to the University of New Hampshire. So I always look for those New Hampshire connections.

But I think it raised the significant challenges there, but what wasn't clear to me is the story suggested that the operation was endorsed and then there was some questions about whether it was going to go forward and so how much is everybody down the chain

of command aware of what those measures are and operating on them cooperatively?

General NICHOLSON. Ma'am, one of the points, and this is subjective in a sense, conceptually what we're doing, of course, is to separate the enemy from the people in an area and then enable this connection to occur between the government and the people.

So gauging the effectiveness of that, there's a subjectivity to it in certain areas. We are looking—there are certain metrics that we track. We're continually looking at them to make sure they're the right metrics and we—for example, there are certain metrics that are not useful in gauging our success.

Let me give you an example. We will see an increase in violence in some areas. We introduced the 30,000 troops. We're going to see an increase in significant activities. So there will be an increase in casualties in all likelihood.

But within that, looking at the trends, for example, on counter-IED work, IEDs cause the majority of our casualties. Looking at and tracking closely our turn-ins of IEDs and how many of those are being done by the civilians is an indicator to us of an increasing connection between the government and the people in that they're turning in IEDs. So this is an example of some of the kinds of things we try to track closely.

We have a series of metrics that track the effectiveness of the Afghan security forces. We talked a little bit about retention, recruiting, and so forth. We're looking closely at those metrics that would indicate an increasing connection between the government. Again, those are little tougher to get. It's not simply about how much money we spend or however the survey instruments are useful and where we have a baseline and then can use that baseline to work against. We are doing that.

I think that it's a work in progress, it's fair to say, at getting the right metrics, but we're working very hard at it and I know we've of late—of course, we're submitting certain reports to Congress, the 12/30 report, the 12/31 have been very important in trying to capture and convey our progress. So in fact, David Sedney was just on the Hill this week talking to staffers about the recent 12/30 report and 12/31.

So it is something we're continually working at to get it right and we recognize the criticality of it and being able to gauge our success as we go forward.

David, I don't know if you have anything you would like to add on the refinement of the metrics.

Mr. SEDNEY. Well, the only thing I'd add is that there is a legislative requirement for metrics and the National Security Council has presented those and we are reviewing—the administration's reviewing the congressional response to that and we are—the administration is working broadly.

As General Nicholson said, we also had the 12/30 report which we submitted to Congress last week. So there's broad metrics we have.

In terms of the specific metrics for evaluating individual operations and any comments about the school and the Joe Klein article, Frank would be the one who's on the scene and would be able to answer any questions there.

Thank you.

Mr. RUGGIERO. Just in terms of that article, I think I mentioned earlier that Zhari is a district that—again, not to get into the upcoming operations, but just as a statement of fact, Zhari is a district just to the west of Kandahar City, and it is an area that is largely under the control of the Taliban.

If you wanted to compare any part of the Kandahar operation to what happened in Marjah, it would most likely be in Zhari. So that captain has some real challenges out there. I've met with him several times and he's just got some challenges.

Senator SHAHEEN. Tell him we appreciate it.

Mr. RUGGIERO. Will do.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

Just a couple of quick summary questions.

Mr. Ruggiero, General, as you look at the picture now and you've kind of worked at this thing, what gives you the greatest hope, and what is the biggest hurdle? What keeps you awake the most and worries you?

General NICHOLSON. Sir, the greatest hope in me resides in the individual Afghans and the tribes and groups that I've had the opportunity to work with over the past 4 years.

I believe that a significant number of them—a sufficient number of them—want this to succeed and therefore it is possible. They want a better way of life for themselves and their children. Universally, wherever we go, whether it's a village in Kunar or a shura in an urban area down in Kandahar, you see a universal desire to improve their condition, to put this 30 years of war behind them.

I think it's fair to say that they also see this as their last best chance in some cases to really effect those changes within their society. I see tremendous hope in the young people in Afghanistan, the explosion of cell phone usage, the desire for education.

One anecdote I've used as kind of symptomatic of this is, as you'll recall, the tragedy in December 2008 when we had acid thrown in the faces of school girls by Taliban in Kandahar City and the reaction to that was telling. These are young women in Kandahar on television unveiled, pointing their fingers at the camera, saying you will not deny me the right to get an education, and while they're afraid and concerned, there's also a burning desire to improve their lot and to move forward for themselves and their society and that's what gives me the greatest hope.

My greatest concerns are the corrupt practices that have been mentioned. It's not the enemy that concerns me as much as the ability of the government to connect with the people and the ability of the government to enhance its legitimacy to the point that the population of Afghanistan wants their governance, and again I see positive indicators there, as well.

I've, you know, mentioned Governor Mangal, but there's many other great Afghan civil servants and especially in the military and in the police who have seen—who really at some degree of personal risk, be it political or even physical risk, are willing to step out and do the right thing.

So again, it's those individual Afghans that I've had the privilege of working with and the Afghan society that I've had the chance

to interact with that gives me the greatest hope that we'll move forward.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, General.

Mr. Ruggiero.

Mr. RUGGIERO. I would agree with General Nicholson. It's the bravery of the Afghans to take on this challenge and I'll just give you a story of something that happened in the past 5 or 6 days.

The Mayor of Kandahar, at great personal risk, we're trying to get him to make sure that the shuras in the city are more representative. So he went out to Subdistrict 6 in Kandahar City and he went there with the district governor of Argandab because this was a point in the city, a weak point where the Afghan Government doesn't really control it directly and there were Taliban had infiltrated in there and were launching attacks back into Argandab.

He went out there at great personal risk and he removed the subdistrict governor who was there who was ineffective, put in place, called for a more representative shura to try to get at some of the causes of the reason why the Taliban had come in. So just an example of the great bravery. His deputy was assassinated 2 weeks before that. So the bravery and the commitment of some of the Afghans is very impressive.

The greatest concern I think I have is the issue of capacity on the Afghan side. There is an American speed of doing things and we can go in with a battalion of Marines or a battalion of Army soldiers and United States civilians and we can have an effect in a district without a doubt. In the end, though, you have to—this has to be the Afghan process. This has to be—we have to operate at Afghan speed.

I think that calls for patience in this effort and I know that that's a challenge. So I think on my side, the greatest concern is capacity on the Afghan side.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, fair enough. Those are good warnings and good encouragements and let me just say how very much we appreciate and respect the work that you all are engaged in. It is tough work. I know it's hard to put the troops out there and see them take the risks they are taking and you always bear that burden, too, as we all do, but we are very, very appreciative to you and the stakes are high in many, many ways.

So we thank you for helping us to understand a little better where we are and where we are going and we will continue to engage with you as we go forward.

Senator Lugar, do you have any additional remarks?

Senator LUGAR. Just confirm we all feel thanks and we appreciate your testimony.

The CHAIRMAN. On that note, gentlemen, we'll let you get back to work, a different kind of work.

Thank you very much. We stand adjourned. Thank you.

[Whereupon the hearing was adjourned at 11:33 a.m.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

RESPONSES OF BG JOHN NICHOLSON TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY
SENATOR ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.

Question. A critical component of General McChrystal's strategy is to mitigate the Taliban's ability to influence the Afghan population. The initial phases of counter-insurgency operations in Marjah were designed to separate the Taliban from the local populous and facilitate the legitimate government. According to recent news reports, however, young men in Afghan villages increasingly are supporting the Taliban. With nearly 50 percent of the male population between the ages of 15 and 29, this could provide the Taliban ample fighters for the insurgency.

- To what extent has the Taliban's ability to control and recruit from the local population been reduced or eliminated?

Answer. One of the major contributors to the insurgency is a basic lack of options and opportunities afforded to the population, specifically to young males in the age group of 15–29. Coalition forces continue to get at this issue by working on a four-pronged approach that includes ensuring a safe and secure environment, bringing back basic government institutions and functions, providing and supporting basic services, and working to develop economic opportunities. Through taking this holistic approach, jobs and opportunities have opened up in both the government and commercial sectors; providing more opportunities and options to those who otherwise would not have any.

In Marjah specifically, four major bazaars and over 100 new shops have opened up, the District Governors have taken a leading role, the councils are now functioning, students have been returning to schools, many clinics have reopened with two new ones being built, all within the timeframe between 1 February 2010 and 1 June 2010. As improvements along all four areas continue to increase, so will opportunities for the youth of Afghanistan and alternatives, such as working with the insurgency, will become much less attractive.

Question. A recent report by the International Council on Security and Development on Operation Moshtarak in Marjah reveals some disheartening information regarding its perception by Afghans. According to the report, 61 percent of those interviewed feel more negative about NATO forces than before the military offensive was conducted. According to that survey, the operation does not seem to be successful at winning the hearts and minds of the local Afghans.

- Is this an accurate account of the current feelings of the local population toward coalition forces?
- Does this also mean that we are failing to meet a fundamental tenet of the new strategy?

Answer. The survey done by the International Council on Security and Development (ICOS) was a telling survey, but only represented a very small contingent of the population within the Helmand and Kandahar provinces. From Helmand province alone, only 314 Afghan men were questioned in the survey. This does not make the report invalid, but it does bring to light that it is only a microcosm of the overall attitudes and perceptions in the area.

General McChrystal briefed in his 1 June report that during a period of increased operational tempo, there would be an increase in the amount of violence before the government and Afghan confidence begin to increase and violence began to drop again. This survey was taken during a period of that increased level of violence and likely was reflective of the populations' attitudes as a result of that. Now that the security portion of the operation has begun to subside and the civil and strategic process is being made, those perceptions would likely be different if polled again today.

Question. According to the International Council on Security and Development survey, 59 percent of those interviewed believed the Taliban will return to Marjah after the Operation, which would be devastating to women's rights in the region.

- How do women in Marjah perceive Operation Moshtarak?

Answer. Using the strategy of "Clear, Hold, and Build," ISAF is ensuring that once an area is secure, there is little opportunity for a reemergence of the insurgency. Marjah is currently in the Hold/Build phase of the operation, and although some insurgent attacks still occur, ISAF has been effective in clearing the insurgent threats. A significant Taliban return to the area is unlikely.

Women's rights in Afghanistan remain a key issue and a top priority of ISAF and the administration. Secretary of State, recently reemphasized this on her recent trip

to Kabul when she said, “I have consistently raised with all levels of the Afghan Government, with everyone else from the EU to ISAF and the U.N., the absolute necessity of our standing firmly together in our demands that women not be marginalized.”

One of the ways the military is working to better connect with the women of the Afghan population is with the new concept of the Female Engagement Teams (FET). The Marines have been using FETs in Helmand province with some results, claiming that local women are more likely to talk about some of the real issues in the area than the men are, once that trust is gained.

Question. A new police force was unveiled during the Marjah operations, the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP). This security force, as with the other forces, faces a strong test as to whether they can maintain law and order as well as reduce corruption and extortion. Historically, corruption and extortion are two of the biggest complaints lodged by the local population.

- How have the Afghan National Police forces performed their security functions and are they achieving the desired results?

Answer. The ANCOP are a proven national police force that have been in existence for more than 5 years. The ANCOP force was modeled as a gendarmerie-type of national police intended to operate anywhere within Afghanistan. They are the most respected segment of the Afghan National Police (ANP) in Afghanistan. Their superior reputation is based on more stringent selection criteria, additional quality training they receive, and proven performance.

There are currently 5,197 assigned ANCOP with 1,586 in training. As a nationally deployable police force they are used in the most challenging environments to support priority missions. They do suffer a high attrition rate in large part due to private security companies (PSCs) luring them away with substantially greater offers of financial remuneration. In the last 3 months, the ANCOP have had attrition rates of 5.2 percent, 4.07 percent, and 2.26 percent. These rates are decreasing however as NTM-A and the IJC in conjunction with the Afghan Ministry of Interior (MOI) are implementing quality-of-life initiatives.

The ANP in general and the ANCOP in particular, have made great strides in maintaining law and order in areas where they receive mentoring and sufficient support. There is already evidence that the new MOI accession model of recruit, train, and assign has paid dividends toward development of a more professional Afghan police force. Additionally, a renewed focus on police development, coupled with an infusion of professional police trainers from NATO and non-NATO contributors, continues to show progress in all areas of Afghan police development.

Question. As operations are expanding in Afghanistan, we are continually reminded of the proliferation and lethality of improvised explosive devices. IEDs have become the insurgents’ weapon of choice and are the deadliest weapon against our men and women in combat.

- Can you please provide us with an update on what we are doing to reduce insurgents’ ability to manufacture, emplace, and detonate these deadly weapons?

Answer. Reducing insurgents’ ability to manufacture, emplace, and detonate IEDs, while more effectively protecting our troops, is a top priority for the Department of Defense (DOD). As the statistics indicate, IEDs alone account for the greatest number of U.S., coalition, and Afghan forces casualties in Afghanistan—approximately 60 percent.

DOD has been pursuing a multifaceted approach to Counter-IED (C-IED) operations, focusing efforts on improving intelligence collection, fielding better equipment, expanding training and integrating systems more coherently to address this complex threat holistically. The establishment of the C-IED Senior Integration Group (CSIG) by the Secretary of Defense in December 2009 has provided executive-level oversight by establishing C-IED focus areas and synchronizing DOD, inter-agency and international actions in support of these areas. The Joint IED Defeat Organization (JIEDDO) continues to facilitate industry solutions and training programs to better prepare United States and coalition forces deploying to Afghanistan.

General Petraeus’ counterinsurgency 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 with the human intelligence (HUMINT) needed to effectively neutralize the IED threat.

Countering the IED menace with a comprehensive approach that relentlessly attacks the entire IED network will remain a top priority for DOD and our partners.

RESPONSE OF BG JOHN NICHOLSON TO QUESTION SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY
SENATOR JOHN BARRASSO

Question. Last year, the Taliban more than doubled the number of homemade bombs used against U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan. The number of IED attacks is expected to climb further as the surge in Afghanistan continues. During Operation Moshtarak, the United States Marine Corps unveiled the Assault Breacher Vehicles (ABV) for route clearance operations to ensure freedom of movement and continuity of operations. It is my understanding that there are less than 10 ABVs in theater which are in high demand.

- Do we need more ABVs to clear minefields and potential IED threats in Afghanistan?

Answer. The Joint Staff reviews and validates all new requests for additional forces and equipment. The Joint Staff and Central Command (CENTCOM), the combatant command responsible for the Afghanistan area of operations, have not received any requests for additional ABVs. We do not assess that there is an operational requirement for additional ABVs at this time.

Assault Breacher Vehicles are designed for deliberate breaching of complex obstacles. They best support clearing operations like the recent Operation Moshtarek in Central Helmand River Valley, Afghanistan. ABVs have limitations on use due to their size, weight, and mobility, making them suitable for use in specific terrain profiles; for example, ABVs are not well suited for urban and restricted terrain. Numerous other specially designed armored wheeled vehicles are in Afghanistan, or are on their way, that better support mission requirements for route clearance.

