

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable MARK R. WARNER led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. INOUE).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, December 10, 2010.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable MARK R. WARNER, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Virginia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WARNER thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, if any, the Senate will turn to a period of morning business, with Senator SANDERS of Vermont to be recognized at 10:15 a.m. to speak for whatever time he feels appropriate.

There will be no rollcall votes during today's session of the Senate. The next rollcall vote will be at 3 p.m. Monday, December 13, on the motion to invoke cloture with respect to the tax agreement. As I announced last night, that vote will be held open longer than usual to allow Senators to make that most important vote.

I have nothing further.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will now be in a period of morning business.

The Senator from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, this month, the Obama administration will submit its review of the war in Afghan-

istan. I expect—and I think a number of Members of Congress expect—that this review will provide answers to the key questions before us, questions the American people deserve answers to. I believe these questions fall into three broad categories: first of all, Afghan governance; second, development and humanitarian efforts; and, finally, establishing a sustainable security environment in Afghanistan.

Since the announcement of a new strategy in December of 2009 and the deployment of 30,000 additional troops, I have sought to carefully monitor U.S. progress toward its goals. As part of this effort, I have paid special attention to combating the top killer of U.S. troops, which, of course, is improvised explosive devices. I chaired a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on this topic on November 18 and will continue to press our government and our leaders and governments in the region to do more to restrict the availability of components that make up these terrible weapons, especially, of course, ammonium nitrate, which flows into Afghanistan every day of the week to make IEDs that kill our troops.

I am pleased significant progress has been made by the Department of State, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Department of Defense to coordinate an all-of-government approach to this problem. I wish to applaud the recent efforts of the Afghan security forces that seized one metric ton of ammonium nitrate on Monday in Zabul Province. All the key players appear to be on the same page on this issue, but there still has not been a significant decrease of these deadly weapons in Afghanistan. I trust that the December review by the administration will address the flow of ammonium nitrate, and I look forward to continuing to work closely with the administration on this issue.

At a strategic level, too many questions remain as we head into the December review. I would like to list some of those right now.

First of all, on the issue of governance, I have two questions I hope the December review will address. First, do we have a political strategy—a political strategy—in place to ensure that the Afghan Government is prepared to enact reforms that concretely show the population it represents their key interests and concerns? I believe our efforts to pressure the Afghan Government have been at best uneven in this area, due, in large part, to a reluctance to pressure the Afghan leadership.

Any security gains in Afghanistan can be easily squandered without serious progress on governance. The United States, ISAF, and Afghan security forces are sacrificing too much as the Afghan Government fails to enact reforms in the best interests of the Afghan people. It will be difficult to succeed in Afghanistan without a strategy to help build the institutions of governance, including the judiciary, political parties, and, of course, electoral institutions.

As difficult as these interactions may be, the international community must be more willing to confront the Afghan Government on issues of political representation, corruption, and the rule of law. We should stand ready to help build and develop these democratic institutions.

The 2009 Presidential election and the 2010 parliamentary elections were rife with problems that seriously undermined the confidence of the international community in Afghanistan's ability to conduct elections free of fraud and manipulation. If the electoral process remains deeply flawed, the Afghan people's support for the democratic process itself may well erode.

While the government has said it wants to develop a "strategy for long-term electoral reform that addresses in particular the sustainability of the electoral process," few steps have been taken in this direction. The election law is in need of serious reform. The executive branch has nearly exclusive power over the Independent Election Commission and Electoral Complaints Commission. The single nontransferable vote system impedes the development of political parties, an essential long-term way to organize and represent the interests of the Afghan people.

Corruption continues to be a serious issue that affects citizens across Afghanistan, especially in the southern part of the country. A recent public opinion survey conducted by the Washington Post, ABC News, the BBC, and ARD television in Germany showed that 55 percent of respondents in Kandahar say they have been asked for bribes from the police—55 percent—well above the national figure of 21 percent. Moreover, most Kandahar residents say their situation would only get worse if they exercised due process and filed a complaint about a public official.

U.S. efforts to improve governance at times compete with our security concerns. There is an inherent tension between the United States and ISAF forces in efforts to engage, to combat extremist elements at the local level and cooperation with warlords who rule over certain areas. While there is an imperative to collect intelligence and conduct operations that may require cooperation with local power brokers, I am concerned the long-term cost of such interaction is very high. Are we empowering another generation of local power brokers who have little regard for representing the interests of the local population? That is a question that needs to be asked over and over, and we need answers to that question.

It is a simple fact, disaffection among Afghan citizens with the central government and local power brokers provides recruiting opportunities for the Taliban. This is a serious concern because it gets to the heart of our engagement in Afghanistan: Cooperation

with local warlords can provide short-term security gains, but what is the long-term impact? I hope the administration's December review will address this issue.

Question No. 2: What is the state of the reconciliation process with the Taliban? I have expressed serious concerns about the impact of negotiations with the Taliban on women and other vulnerable groups in Afghanistan. My concern grew—and I know others' concern as well—our concern grew in reading the poll numbers from Afghanistan recently. There was a 13-percent jump from last year among respondents who say women's rights are suffering.

The December review should address the current state of play with respect to these negotiations. The recent Afghan poll showed that nearly three-quarters of Afghans now believe their government should pursue negotiations with the Taliban, with almost two-thirds willing to accept a deal allowing Taliban leaders to hold political office.

Ultimately, there must be a political solution to end the war in Afghanistan. I am not suggesting we are close at this time to that result, but we need to know the degree to which the administration and the Karzai government are coordinated and headed down the same path. International engagement on any negotiation process will be essential to long-term success. Pakistan has a role to play and is a necessary element to any long-lasting peace agreement.

The next area, security. U.S. operations in southern Afghanistan appear to be having a positive impact on Afghan public opinion. Sixty-seven percent of the people in the Province of Helmand describe their security as good, a 14-percent jump from December 2009. Nearly two-thirds of Helmand residents state that Afghanistan is on the right track.

This is an indication that positive momentum has been built in Afghanistan's most sensitive region. But such gains can be short-lived, and in order to facilitate a sustainable security, we must take a long-term approach to ensure that the Afghan Government can provide for its own security.

The training of the Afghan National Security Forces is a key threshold question. We cannot allow Afghanistan to once again become a haven for al-Qaida or other extremist groups to launch attacks against the United States. ISAF forces have denied al-Qaida this haven since 2001. However, we cannot provide this security in perpetuity. The Afghans have to assume more responsibility for their own security, and we must do all we can to prepare the Afghan National Security Forces for that day.

So where do we stand at this point? I would have to say the view is decidedly mixed. For years, the international community exercised what can be characterized as gross neglect in building Afghan security forces, and only recently have we begun to take on this task.

First, some positive news on this issue. We do not hear enough about this.

Under the leadership of Lieutenant General Caldwell, the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan, the so-called NTM-A, has been a source of real progress. The Afghan National Army and Police are exceeding—exceeding—their recruitment goals. As of August of this year, the Afghan National Army's total strength had grown to 138,164, exceeding the goal for October 2010 by more than 8,000 troops. As of August, the Afghan National Police had an end strength of 119,639, exceeding the 2010 goal of 109,000. These recruitment numbers are an important sign of progress, but serious concerns remain related to the quality of the force, the retention rate, and the low rate of literacy.

The Afghan National Army has significant shortages in officer and non-commissioned officer leadership. Effective junior leaders are essential to a professional force since they control immediate on-the-ground situations.

The Ministry of Defense and the training mission in Afghanistan are working to overcome a shortfall of more than 4,500 Afghan National Army officers. There are more Officer Candidate School units, twice as many seats in the Integration Mujahedeen Course, and larger classes at the National Military Academy.

As for noncommissioned officers, the Afghan National Army faces a shortage of more than 10,500. Similar expansions in training capacity and direct entry programs are underway to address this deficiency. According to a recent Pentagon report, the gap will not be closed until the end of 2012.

The Pentagon also reports we face a shortfall of more than 900 international trainers in Afghanistan. I hope our allies in ISAF can help to address this very important training need. Many European countries have a proud history of developing elite paramilitary forces. This valued expertise is needed right now in Afghanistan.

While expanding capacity is critical to growing the force, I hope the December review by the administration will address not just the efforts to grow more leaders but also describe how these leaders are laying the foundation for professionalizing the Afghan national security forces.

Retention and attrition rates. For years, the Afghan national security force's attrition rate has been an issue. Facilitating rapid growth while increasing quality requires that retention rates remain high.

In January 2010, the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board approved the goal of developing a force of 305,600 personnel by October 2011. Recruiting efforts compared with increased retention have allowed the force to grow ahead of schedule so far. Moving forward, projections remain uncertain. The Defense Department reports the police have met attrition and retention

goals. However, the Afghan National Army still has issues with attrition that may impact its ability to maintain its impressive growth in numbers. This month's review by the administration should clarify projections and detail efforts to boost retention.

Literacy is a big problem. The literacy rates are very low in the Afghan Security Force and this must be addressed. Consider this story from Lieutenant General Caldwell. He visited a base in northern Afghanistan where 90 percent of the troops claimed they had been unpaid for months. To limit corruption, the government has been paying the troops by electronic funds transfer instead of cash. The troops had no idea, however, since they could not read their bank statements.

Think about weapons security. How can a soldier be sure he has been assigned a weapon if he cannot read the serial number? Illiteracy is widespread in the force: Only 11 percent of enlisted personnel can read, write, or do simple math. This creates significant challenges in professionalizing the security force. In response, a huge literacy program has grown around the fielding of the Afghan security forces. So we have much to do on that.

I will move to the last part of our concerns, and that is on development. A qualified Afghan soldier is much cheaper to train and equip on the field than an American, so the overall cost to U.S. taxpayers would certainly diminish as the U.S. forces draw down. But by investing in this large force, there are long-term implications. Do we expect to pay for the Afghan security forces 10 years from now, 20 years from now? At what point will the Afghan Government be able to collect its own revenue to fund its security as well as other priorities?

That is, again, why responsible Afghan governance is essential. While the international community will shoulder much of the humanitarian and security burden in the short term, the Afghan Government needs to take steps to increase its domestic revenue collection, as well as put into place a sound legislative framework to encourage investment. They need to develop a minerals framework law, and they also need to put in place changes to bring about a stronger infrastructure.

Let me close with a reflection upon our troops. We have the obligation here in the Senate to ask and have answers to very critical questions, whether they relate to development or governance or security, and especially on the question of security. We also have an obligation to remember and keep in mind the human toll.

SSG SEAN FLANNERY

In the State of Pennsylvania, as in a lot of States, we have lost a lot of soldiers. To date, we have lost 60 service-members since the beginning of the war in Afghanistan. In Iraq, we got to the number of about 196—just below 200. Let me share one story as I conclude. Two weeks ago, Pennsylvania

lost Army SSG Sean Flannery who died a hero in Afghanistan. He is from the town of Wyomissing, PA, in Bucks County. He was an infantry squad leader who was killed after delivering first aid to a wounded Afghan soldier. Sean and his team carried the man to an evacuation helicopter. They stepped on an improvised explosive device which killed Sean and another soldier. Staff Sergeant Flannery was 29 years old. After he graduated from Wyomissing High School in 1999 and Shippensburg University, he was determined to serve his country. He was on his fourth tour of duty after having served two tours in Iraq and a prior tour in Afghanistan. He earned a Bronze Star because of his heroism and then another commendation last week. One of his high school classmates paid tribute to his friend at a service earlier this week. He said:

His fellow soldiers talked about how much they respected him and what a great leader he was and how they had true love for him, and not a word of it surprised us. He was the type of guy everybody wants their son to be—loyal, humble, and generous. I was honored to have him as a friend.

That is what Matt Rader, a classmate of Sean Flannery's, said about Sean.

All of us are honored to represent these young men and women who fight for us and some who die for this cause. Today we pray for those families. We pray for Sean and his family. But in the larger sense I guess we pray for ourselves as well. We pray that we are worthy and can prove ourselves worthy of their valor.

One of the ways Members of the Congress can prove ourselves worthy of that valor is to ask and demand answers to these very difficult questions, no matter who the administration is and no matter what party, because we have to get this policy right. We have an obligation to get it right, for Sean Flannery and for those who have loved and lost, and for our country.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at the conclusion of my remarks, the distinguished Senator from Rhode Island, Senator REED, be given time on the floor for his remarks.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO JACE JOHNSON

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I wish to take a moment to pay tribute to someone who is very special and very dear to me, my former Chief of Staff, Jace Johnson. Over this past recess, I learned that my Chief of Staff, Jace Johnson, would be leaving the Senate to pursue opportunities in the private sector.

Change often catches us by surprise. As the Presiding Officer can imagine, I had come to rely on the talents and in-

sight that Jace offered over many these past years. He was my strong right arm, someone in whom I had complete confidence, and still do. For 8 years, Jace worked on my staff and dedicated his efforts to serving Utah and improving our country. Undoubtedly, his work ethic and his straightforward approach to public service have greatly benefited us all. Jace is sorely missed by all of us on our staff and all of us in our office. He provided strong leadership at a time when it was absolutely crucial to us.

To fully understand the void created by Jace's absence, one has to know a bit more about him. When you walked into Jace's office, you were greeted by proudly displayed Utah college and university pennants. Aside from making an interesting and welcoming environment, the banners proclaimed Jace's passion for sports. Like me, he spent his boyhood as an avid basketball player. I regret we never had the opportunity for a one-on-one game, but I am still convinced I would have kicked his tail and I would have won. Although when I think about it, he is in a lot better shape than I am.

His love of hoops led Jace to play basketball at Snow College in central Utah. Soon thereafter, Jace served a 2-year mission for the Church of Jesus Christ and Latter Day Saints in the Philadelphia, PA area. Being from smalltown Idaho, I can only imagine the new experiences Philadelphia had to offer. It undoubtedly left quite an impression. His wife Cori credits her husband's time in Philadelphia for his willingness to venture back to the east coast after college.

Jace and Cori met while they were attending college at Brigham Young University in Provo, UT. They have three wonderful children—Ashley, Benjamin, and Christian. Upon finishing school at BYU, Jace and Cori made the move to Washington, DC, so he could attend graduate school at George Washington University and earn his MBA.

While Jace was still in school, he actually worked in my office as an intern. He didn't stay long, however, because as the saying goes, he had bigger fish to fry. By the time he returned to Capitol Hill to work on a more permanent basis, he had already achieved remarkable success in the business world. After working for a few years at Visa International, he became the director of finance at the Corvis Corporation, a cutting-edge network and media solutions company. Jace was the third employee to be hired at Corvis when it was still a startup, and while he was there he helped secure financing for the company as it prepared to go public in the year 2000. Jace's contribution to Corvis allowed the company to grow from a small startup employing a handful of people into an international company with more than 3,000 employees and a value of \$40 billion.

Jace joined my staff in 2002, coming on as a legislative assistant, working

mostly on telecommunications issues. In that position, he demonstrated the keen understanding and strategic thinking that had made him such a success in the business world. After 3 years, I appointed him to be my legislative director, and in that position he continued to excel and became a vital and integral part of my efforts here in the Senate. I grew to depend on him more and more, and in January of 2008, Jace took over as my Chief of Staff.

I used to joke with him that working for me was only a hobby, because he didn't need the money. Of course, anyone who knew and worked with Jace can attest that is simply not true. He put his heart and soul into his work in the Senate. For Jace, failure wasn't permissible, so he spent early mornings and late nights ensuring the work was done and done right. His commitment to me personally and to my work here in the Senate was rooted in his belief—a belief he reiterated at every opportunity—that what we were doing was in the best interests of our country and for the people of Utah.

I think what I appreciated most about Jace is his unwavering honesty. In a town filled with people who only want to tell you what they want you to hear, Jace was refreshingly direct and straightforward. I have always attributed this to the fact that he is, to put it bluntly, just a little bit smarter—maybe not just a bit smarter, a whole lot smarter—than most people. People who don't see the big picture and who can't predict what might happen down the line have the need to hedge bets, cover bases, and speak without committing. Jace Johnson has never had that problem. When a goal is identified and a plan set in motion, he is usually a few steps ahead of everyone else and he can see where problems might arise. Chances are he has already come up with solutions to those problems. An individual with that kind of rare insight and understanding has the license to speak directly where others would hem and haw. I was lucky enough to be the beneficiary of Jace's ability to speak frankly and honestly, and on more than one occasion that meant I was on the receiving end. I think I can speak for every Member of the Senate when I say that that kind of support from staff is a treasured commodity.

It is very clear I will miss Jace Johnson on my staff. However, I think it would be even more telling to hear from some of the people of Utah who have high praise for Jace and the service he has rendered.

Utah Governor Gary Herbert had this to say:

Jace is a man of great insight and understanding. He is able to think strategically and anticipate potential roadblocks, which has, and will continue, to serve him well. I wish him the best of luck and success in his new position.

Jason Perry, Governor Herbert's Chief of Staff, said:

I have had the opportunity to work with Jace for many years. His uncanny ability to