

AFGHANISTAN: GOVERNANCE AND THE CIVILIAN STRATEGY

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

UNITED STATES SENATE

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WEDNESDAY, JULY 14, 2010

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:09 p.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. John F. Kerry (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Senators Kerry, Feingold, Menendez, Cardin, Casey, Webb, Shaheen, Kaufman, Lugar, Corker, DeMint, and Wicker.

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

The CHAIRMAN. This hearing will come to order.

Let me say, at the outset of the hearing, that the rules of the committee are crystal clear with respect to any kind of demonstrations of any sort, whatsoever. This committee prides itself in listening carefully and in probing and having a thoughtful dialogue, even about the most emotional and contentious issues, and we ask every member of the public to respect that and the rights of the Senators and the committee to be able to conduct their business.

I want to thank everyone for coming this afternoon, and I want to extend a very special thank you and welcome to Ambassador Dick Holbrooke, who has taken time from an exceedingly busy schedule in order to appear again before the committee.

We look forward to hearing your insights, Ambassador Holbrooke, and I thank you for doing this.

I might mention that Ambassador Holbrooke is a little conscribed in the amount of time that he can be with us, simply because he's got to leave from here directly for the airport in order to leave to go to Islamabad and Kabul. And Secretary Clinton will be following, I think, in a few days. So, a lot is happening, and it is timely for us to be able to meet here today and have this discussion.

I also want to say, very clearly, that I think Ambassador Holbrooke has assembled an outstanding team, a group of people many of whom I know personally and who I think bring an enormous amount of experience and intellectual ability to this challenge. And I congratulate him and the Secretary for that, and I want to also say that I think he has been doing an outstanding job under exceedingly difficult circumstances.

I think all of us know that, for 7 or 8 years, the war in Afghanistan proceeded as if there was no, really, clear definition of the mission or the strategy. I think it's in the last year or so that we've

begun to try to pull that together. But, it's obviously been complicated by the events that intervened over the course of those 7 or 8 years.

This is the Foreign Relations Committee's 11th hearing on Afghanistan in the past year and a half, and the number reflects both our commitment and our concern about understanding the challenges of this part of the world—Afghanistan, Pakistan, South Asia—and our recognition of the critical role that this conflict plays in our own national security.

I have said that the committee will continue, over the course of these next months, to continue a series of hearings on this topic, and I think it is a reflection of the importance of what is happening there, the importance of the region. It also is a reflection of an unfortunate fact. Last month, Afghanistan surpassed Vietnam, a place that both Ambassador Holbrooke and I are all too familiar with, as the longest military campaign in American history. More than 1,000 men and women have lost their lives in Afghanistan; nearly 6,000 of them have been grievously injured. And we owe a duty to every single one of them, and to their families and to the tens of thousands of other military and civilian personnel in Afghanistan from our country, and our partners from other countries—we owe them all the exercise of our oversight role in order to seriously and responsibly present them with the best strategy possible.

It would be avoidance if we didn't say that this is a difficult moment in the Afghan conflict. Our progress is decidedly mixed, particularly in the south, where the Taliban are strongest. The Taliban are currently assassinating government officials and tribal leaders, embarking on a campaign of intimidating Afghans who want to support coalition efforts.

Regrettably, corruption in some quarters appears to grow. One in three Afghan households reports having to pay a bribe to obtain public services. And our civilian aid efforts to bring stability and consolidate military gains are off to a slow start in the south and in the east.

Many people have asked the question, whether or not we have the right strategy. So, this is a good time to be asking hard questions about the progress that we're making toward our objectives of defeating al-Qaeda and bringing a measure of stability to Afghanistan. It's also time to demand accountability from our partners on the battlefield and in the corridors of government, from Washington to Brussels, from Kabul to Kandahar.

It is also time to assess how our strategy fits the realities on the ground. Over the past year, some of those realities have changed, and, I might say, few for the better. I happen to believe that the conditions, which I set out last October for deploying more troops, still hold today. And I'm concerned as to whether or not those kinds of conditions are being adequately met.

First, the insistence on the presence of reliable Afghan troops to partner with our military as we decide to proactively clear an area.

Second, when we engage in holding those areas, I believe it is critical to secure capable local leaders with whom we can partner, in order to provide effective governance. Governance remains one of the great challenges, if not the great challenge.

And finally, the “build” and “transfer” components of our mission really require that area to shift to Afghan control. And in order to do that, the civilian side must be prepared to move quickly, with well-implemented support structure, underneath the “clear” and “hold” efforts. When those conditions are met, it’s hard to imagine that you’re not going to have a better outcome.

Today’s hearing is intended to take a tough look at the civilian strategy to see if we are on the right path. The administration requested \$4.4 billion in fiscal year 2010 to support civilian efforts in Afghanistan, and another \$3.9 billion for the next fiscal year. And needless to say, we need to make sure this money is spent as well as possible.

In recent weeks, the committee staff conducted 16 briefings with the State Department and USAID in order to examine how we are spending the taxpayers’ money, dollar by dollar, sector by sector, in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It’s our intention, needless to say, to continue to keep a close eye on how that money is being spent to promote stability in the region.

I might add that the committee will shortly be releasing a report—I’ve informed Ambassador Holbrooke about this—a report on this topic of corruption, and hopefully it is a report which will set out some recommendations for how we might be able to better respond to some of these issues.

In the end, all of the billions of dollars and all of the United States efforts—best efforts—all of the sacrifices by our troops, are all going to be irrelevant if the United States and our partners do not have the right strategy to establish effective Afghan governance and, ultimately, effective Afghan takeover of responsibility. The problem is that the key element of this strategy is the one over which we have the least control, and that is the willingness and ability of Afghans to assume ownership of the effort.

For nearly 9 years, most Afghans have seen themselves as bystanders in a conflict between the West and al-Qaeda, and a conflict being fought in their homeland. In recent months, we’ve launched a concerted effort to convince Afghans that this is their fight. It’s not an easy task, given the historic distrust of foreigners on Afghan soil, but it’s a vital one.

Ultimately, we need a better understanding of exactly what the definition of “success” is in Afghanistan, and what an acceptable state looks like there, and how achievable it is.

Many have said repeatedly—I think, Ambassador Holbrooke among them, myself, others—that there is no military solution in Afghanistan. Having said that, we absolutely need to understand what the political solution looks like, and how we get there. And those are the most relevant questions that we want to examine in the course of the hearing today.

Senator Lugar.

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

Senator LUGAR. I join the chairman in welcoming Ambassador Holbrooke back to the committee.

This hearing provides an opportunity to review our progress and refine our understanding of United States policy in Afghanistan.

There is substantial concern about our course in Afghanistan, in part because of the recent disruption in our own military leadership, but also because gains in governance, development, military training, and other areas have not occurred at a pace that boosts confidence in President Obama's original timetable.

Some security improvements have been achieved and more are likely to follow, but they have been hard won. In 6 months, the President expects a review by his commanders on the status of our efforts in Afghanistan. This review presumably would determine the shape of an expected transition of responsibilities to Afghan security forces in July 2011. But absent a major realignment on the ground, it is unrealistic to expect that a significant downsizing of U.S. forces could occur at that time without security consequences.

This conclusion is reinforced by recent GAO and inspector general reports that have raised deep concerns over the viability and quality of training for the Afghan National Army and police. The lack of clarity in Afghanistan does not end with the President's timetable. Both civilian and military operations in Afghanistan are proceeding without a clear definition of success. There has been much discussion of our counterinsurgency strategy and methods, but very little explanation of what metrics must be achieved before the country is considered secure.

At some moments it appears as if we are trying to remake the economic, political, and security culture of Afghanistan. We should know by now that such grand ambitions are beyond our resources and powers.

At other moments, it appears we are content with a narrow, security-driven definition of success: Namely, preventing an implacably hostile Taliban regime from taking over the government and preventing Afghanistan from becoming a terrorist safe haven, regardless of what government is in power.

But even if this narrow definition of success were embraced by the Obama administration, it would require amplification. How much Taliban military capability and territorial control is tolerable? What are we currently doing in Afghanistan that is not required to achieve this narrow objective? What are reasonable mileposts for judging progress toward success? What time constraints do we perceive, given resource and alliance pressures? How do dynamics in Pakistan factor into our strategy in Afghanistan?

I recognize that the situation in Afghanistan is fluid and not easily defined. I also understand why an administration would not want to be pinned down to a specific definition of success. The problem is that we are expending enormous resources in Afghanistan. Our resources are finite, and they must be focused effectively. We need to know if some missions that currently are receiving resources are not intrinsic to our objectives. We also need to know what missions are absolutely indispensable to success, however it is defined.

We can't fall back on measuring our military and civilian activities in Afghanistan according to relative progress. Arguably we could make progress for decades, on security, employment, good governance, women's rights and other goals—expending billions of dollars each year—without ever reaching a satisfying conclusion. In

such circumstances, avoiding mission creep toward unattainable goals is essential.

Given this situation, it is reasonable to consider the enlistment of local militias in security operations under the authority of a Ministry of Interior or Defense. This tactic has been frequently debated, and may not be applicable in all cases. But since his arrival in Kabul, General Petraeus appears inclined to explore it.

This decision is a difficult one, given Afghanistan's history of conflict under warlords. As such, local militias are best integrated within a longer term institutionalization plan for such forces. President Karzai presented a draft Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program to NATO for consideration. The issues of reconciliation and reintegration are now in broad discussion. The committee would welcome some remarks on the status of the draft program and its elements, as well as the position of our government toward it. Who is participating and leading the coordination of such discussions with the Afghan Government and groups seeking reconciliation?

I am hopeful that the administration will not wait 6 months to refine its explanation of our goals in Afghanistan. It is up to the President to define success, and delineate how much time and how many resources should be devoted to achieving it.

I appreciate today, as always, Ambassador Holbrooke, your willingness to join us, and I very much look forward to our discussion.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Senator Lugar.

Mr. Ambassador, thank you for your patience. We appreciate it. We look forward to your statement. If you want to try to summarize, and then engage—you've been through this many times—we put the full text in the record as if read in full.

STATEMENT OF HON. RICHARD HOLBROOKE, SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN, DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a great, great honor to be back before this committee.

Thirty-fourth year I've testified before this committee, and there's no committee that plays a more important role in the national security interests of our country.

And I especially want to thank you and Senator Lugar for your historic leadership in the last year and a half in regard to at least two issues, your personal role in regard to the Afghan elections and the leadership you and Senator Lugar provided in what is now known as the KLB, Kerry-Lugar-Berman, legislation for Pakistan which has had an enormous effect, and which I will refer to again in the future.

As you said, Senator, I will be leaving for Islamabad, directly from this hearing, through Andrews Air Force Base, stopping in Germany to refuel and going on to Afghanistan with Secretary Clinton. And I want to be as brief as I can.

First of all, Mr. Chairman, you began by saying we need to demand accountability of our partners. And I think the partners include our partnership, and I welcome the chance to speak again before this distinguished group on our role in this effort.

I want to just begin with the most critical point. And if you will, may I submit my formal statement.

The CHAIRMAN. Absolutely. Without objection, it'll be placed in the record as if read in full.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Eighteen months ago, we inherited a situation in which Afghanistan and Pakistan were treated as separate issues and there was no single approach to it; hence, the unattractive acronym AfPak, which we do not use in public, but which was designed to stress the fact that these issues are closely related. I will return to that theme repeatedly as we go forward.

But, I would just note that, once President Obama and Secretary Clinton gave me this job, 35 other nations appointed counterparts. The U.S. Government reorganized to reflect the fact that you cannot succeed in Afghanistan without Pakistan's involvement. And that, Mr. Chairman, is the underlying strategic principle by which we approach the issues we're discussing today.

In Afghanistan, since I last testified before you, there's been considerable activity in many areas, all of which you know about: the increase in American troops, the implementation of the counter-insurgency strategy under General McChrystal and now General Petraeus. We have worked very closely to do the civilian support for that plan. But, I need to stress, as all of us in this room know, that security is the essential prerequisite for everything else.

In regard to the elections last year, you all know what happened, but the point I want to underscore is that, for the first 10 months of the administration's tenure, from January 21 of last year to November 19, the elections hung over us like a dark cloud, often reaching critical mass, never more tense than when Senator Kerry himself was in Kabul, playing such an instrumental role in the resolution of that near disaster, which, in the end, produced a legitimate government, but in a very messy way.

At that time, we were finally able to look forward to implementation of the strategies we're here to discuss today. And first and foremost among those was the implementation of a change in agriculture, a change in counternarcotics, a change in rule of law, and changes in our attitude about funding contractual efforts.

In this regard, Mr. Chairman, and with your prior permission, I brought members of 6 of the 10 agencies which work with me, and which you referred to, with me today, and very briefly, with your permission, I would just like to introduce them, not simply because of who they are, but because they represent a unique interagency effort. And if they could just quickly stand as I read their names, starting on my left, my chief of staff from the State Department, Rosemarie Pauli; next to her, you all know Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Affairs, Richard Verma; next to him, my deputy, Dan Feldman, who used to work for your committee; next to Dan, Rami Shy, from the Treasury Department; next to him, Matt Stiglitz, from the Justice Department; next to him, Shannon Darcy, from AID; next to Shannon, Quentin Gray, from the U.S. Department of Agriculture; next to Quentin, Raul Ortiz, just joined us from the Department of Homeland Security; and next to him, Kim McClure, on her last day as a State Department staffer—she is going on to a Council on Foreign Relations fellowship.

In the—now, the six agencies not here are CIA, Joint Chiefs of Staff, the FBI, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

No office in the Department's history has had this interagency. And this is designed—I brought them here today, Mr. Chairman, to illustrate to you, as succinctly as possible, that we have a whole-of-government approach here, and there is very good civilian/military coordination.

On the second row, Rina Amiri, our Afghan political expert and a former member of the United Nations team; Tim Lenderking, our new Pakistan country director; and Jim DeHart, our new Afghan country director.

So, with that team behind us, Mr. Chairman, we have embarked on full implementation, in close coordination with CENTCOM and ISAF and the American Embassy in Kabul, of the efforts that you want to discuss today.

I'd like to take a quick look forward, if I might, toward what's coming up. On July 20, Secretary Clinton will lead the American delegation to the Kabul Conference. This will be a conference that involves Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, NATO Secretary General Rasmussen, and somewhere between 35 and 55 Foreign Ministers, numbers still to be determined. It will be the largest gathering of foreign leaders in Afghanistan since the 1970s. She is going because she wants to demonstrate our support for the commitment, our support for the government's efforts, our support for an integrated civilian/military effort that combines our resources and those of the government.

Both you and Senator Lugar correctly made the point that, in the end, it's the Afghan Government that must succeed. We can only help them. Anyone who shared the experience that you and I and Senator Webb and others shared in another war, in another century, know full well what the consequences are if we Americanize the war. We cannot afford to repeat the mistake which at least three people today lived through, personally. And we carry forward those memories, not to be imprisoned by the memories of Vietnam, but to learn from the tactical issues that took place.

But, I want to underscore the fundamental difference between those two wars, since you mentioned it, Mr. Chairman. In this war, our national security interests are at stake, our homeland security is threatened. In Afghanistan that is true, and it affects our policy toward Pakistan.

Now, the biggest change in policy, which could not be implemented until the political situation was behind us, is the reintegration program that President Karzai announced in London, signed the implementing decree on 2 weeks ago, and will unveil fully in Kabul next week. That is the program that was missing from the Afghan equation, the program designed to bring Taliban fighters in voluntarily. As you said, Mr. Chairman, there's no military solution here. So, as General Petraeus and General McChrystal said, you're not going to win this war by killing every member of the Taliban. It just doesn't work that way in this kind of war.

So, the goal here is to create a new program. It was a massive gap in the food chain of our efforts. Led by the Japanese and the British, almost \$200 million has been assembled for this fund. The United States, for its part, with the support of Congress, has

assigned \$100 million of CERP funds for this effort, under General Petraeus's personal control. And those of you who have talked to General Petraeus know that he attaches the highest importance to this issue.

Mr. Chairman, you mentioned your corruption report, and we have, as you said, talked privately about it. We share your concern, we share the concern of Chairwoman Lowey in the other body, and we will read your report with great attention. We are prepared, at some later date, at your convenience, to give you a very detailed briefing of what we have done in the last 18 months. And several of the people sitting behind me have been instrumental in that. I just want to say that we inherited no serious program on this issue. We now have a very large number of people from Treasury, FBI, CIA, DEA, AID, and State working on corruption. Still, Mr. Chairman, it isn't enough, and we well understand that.

President Karzai has committed himself, publicly and privately, to upgrading his anticorruption office, and this will be a major topic of conversation during the Kabul Conference. And we will read your report with great interest.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I want to return to the issue of Pakistan and Afghanistan. I said, at the outset, that we cannot succeed in Afghanistan without Pakistan's participation. Let me go a little further. When we came into office early last year, we set—as an implementing goal for our strategic objective, which is to defeat al-Qaeda and destroy them and protect our homeland—we set several subordinate goals. One of the most important was to bring Afghanistan and Pakistan closer together. Since the day Pakistan became independent, in 1947, there's been a substantial problem between the two countries, most dramatically illustrated by the fact that, the day after Pakistan became independent, Afghanistan opposed their entry into the United Nations, a story which every Pakistani schoolchild is taught in school. The border is still disputed, and the overlay of recent events has made it even more serious.

In the last 15 to 20 years, there has been no serious dialogue between these two neighbors, which are intertwined, and the history of it, the Charlie Wilson's War, you're all familiar with.

We set out the goal of improving that relationship, and in recent months there has been the first narrowing of the distance between Kabul and Islamabad. There have been visits in both directions by both leaders. Those are continuing. General Petraeus has been involved in those. Secretary Clinton, myself, the President of the United States has encouraged it. I do not want to leave your committee, or anyone who's listening to this hearing, with the impression that any agreements have been reached; they have not. I do not want to leave anyone in this committee with the impression that some of the news reports recently, fevered accounts of secret deals between elements in Pakistan and elements in the Taliban, are accurate. We have no evidence whatsoever of the accuracy of those reports. But, there is movement. And that movement, below the radar screen, has been massively supported by the Kerry-Lugar-Berman legislation.

I cannot thank this committee enough—and I mean this sincerely—for what you did last year. It was difficult, and the initial reaction in Pakistan was not, shall I say, pleasant, because there

was a serious misunderstanding. Your personal intervention, Mr. Chairman, ameliorated the problem. We believe it is more or less gone.

The money is beginning to flow. The implementing operating plans have been filed. Some of the money is going forward. Secretary Clinton and I will be making further announcements about this. But, the effect of the legislation is unmistakable, and it has encouraged an improvement in United States-Pakistan relations, a better dialogue between Kabul and Islamabad, and some sense that we are also simultaneously, with the war effort, looking for other ways to move this process forward.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Holbrooke follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR RICHARD C. HOLBROOKE, SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN, DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC

Chairman Kerry, Ranking Member Lugar, thank you for this opportunity to provide an update on our efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Tonight I depart for Islamabad, and then will travel on to Kabul, and New Delhi. This will be my 14th visit to Pakistan in the past 19 months. In addition to meetings with key leaders on a range of topics, I will join Secretary Clinton when she leads the U.S. delegation to the Kabul Conference. While the Kabul Conference has attracted more international attention, we have seen a significant intensification of our dialogue with Pakistan, where we have convened 13 successful Strategic Dialogue Working Group meetings over the past 2 months. These meetings followed the March 24–25 U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue in Washington, and the Secretary's highly successful visit to Pakistan in October 2009. The Kabul Conference and other upcoming events—including another Afghanistan-Pakistan-United States trilateral meeting later this year—are part of a series of milestones concluding with the administration's planned assessment of our progress in December 2010.

As President Obama reiterated just a few weeks ago, our Core Goal in Afghanistan and Pakistan is clear: to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda, and prevent its return to both countries. I participated in the fall 2009 policy review. And in close consultation with Secretary Clinton, Secretary Gates, Admiral Mullen, General Petraeus, Ambassadors Eikenberry and Patterson, and Dr. Shah, my interagency team has been working tirelessly to help implement the President's strategy. We face huge implementation challenges on the ground. But our political and diplomatic engagement with Afghanistan, Pakistan, and other influential countries has evolved significantly since my first official visit to the region in January 2009, bringing us closer to facilitating a durable and favorable resolution of the conflict.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in Pakistan, where we have seen a steady improvement in our bilateral relationship. As members of this committee have recognized, what happens in Pakistan has tremendous implications not only for our goals in Afghanistan, but also for the stability of South-Central Asia and for U.S. national security. We have been pursuing three objectives simultaneously in Pakistan: (1) Enhancing stability (political, economic, and security); (2) supporting Pakistan's offensive against extremists who threaten Pakistan and the United States; and (3) encouraging a closer relationship between Islamabad and Kabul. Through a carefully calibrated approach, we are seeing signs of progress. For the first time in more than a decade, we recognize and are engaging the people of Pakistan on their legitimate interests and priorities, even as we encourage greater collaboration in areas of mutual interest.

Politically, Pakistan's civilian and military leaders have settled into a relatively stable equilibrium as a result of recent constitutional reforms. The upgraded and intensified U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue, which Secretary Clinton and Foreign Minister Quereshi convened in March, has provided a framework to engage Pakistan on mutual priorities and assisted the Pakistani Government in structuring reforms crucial to long-term stability.

Economically, Pakistan's leaders have made many tough decisions necessary to meet the mutually agreed conditions of the IMF's Stand-by agreement. As a result Pakistan has shifted from economic crisis to a period of economic recovery. Other tough decisions and reforms will be necessary to ensure that Pakistan remains on the path toward economic self sufficiency. Our overhauled assistance programs,

made possible by the landmark Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act, will help reinforce these reforms in areas such as energy. They also will further improve our relationship with the Pakistani people by signaling our support for addressing Pakistan's most pressing problems.

These programs would not have been possible without this committee's leadership. We have been engaged in a substantive dialogue on how to best structure our assistance to maximize its impact, and I look forward to continued close collaboration as initial Kerry-Lugar-Berman funding comes online. Equally important is passage of Reconstruction Opportunity Zone (ROZ) legislation, which would further bolster our efforts to stabilize Pakistan's border areas by creating licit economic opportunities. ROZs would also support Pakistani reconstruction efforts in the border areas by stimulating economic opportunity.

On counterterrorism issues, Prime Minister Gilani and President Zardari have united the Pakistani people—including the opposition—behind the Pakistani military's offensive in the tribal areas. We cannot forget that the Pakistani people and armed forces have made huge sacrifices as part of this fight. In the past month alone, scores of innocent Pakistanis have been killed or wounded in suicide attacks. Hundreds of thousands of Pakistanis have also had their lives upended.

As Secretary Clinton emphasized during her October 2009 visit and again at the March Strategic Dialogue, the American people will continue to stand by the Pakistani people in their time of need. We are proud to be the world's largest provider of assistance to displaced Pakistanis and we will build on that support, as I announced during my June visit to Pakistan. USAID and State are continuing to provide a range of stabilization assistance in post-conflict areas. We appreciate this committee's support for innovative approaches to ensuring that this assistance reaches Pakistani communities most affected by violence and most in need of our support. Through this assistance and new mobile and radio communications programs, we are helping the Pakistani people to overcome the extremist narrative and end the cycle of extremist violence.

Our focused security assistance and close cooperation with the Pakistani military are, of course, critical tools for building Pakistani counterinsurgency capabilities and shaping Pakistan's counterterrorism operations. Even as we increase our civilian assistance levels, I believe we must maintain our security assistance and adapt it to emerging needs.

Perhaps the most significant Pakistan-related development since January 2009 has been its improved relationship with Afghanistan. Recognizing that Pakistan's and Afghanistan's futures are intertwined, we have consulted closely with both governments on our strategy. Through the trilateral process, we have facilitated a significant thaw in relations between Islamabad and Kabul and encouraged progress on regional economic integration. There is not yet strategic symmetry on all topics, but the thawing of differences should create additional opportunities as our regional diplomacy and political strategy develops. Significantly, Pakistan's leaders now publicly acknowledge the cross-border nature of the extremist threat and that Afghan stability is in Pakistan's interest. Meanwhile, we have also welcomed the resumption of more frequent high-level dialogue between New Delhi and Islamabad, which should benefit regional stability.

Across the border, the July 20 Kabul Conference will provide an opportunity for the Afghan Government to offer concrete plans to benefit the Afghan people. This is the first major international conference held in Afghanistan since the 1970s and an important step toward greater Afghan ownership and sovereignty. We expect that President Karzai will address commitments he made in his November 2009 inaugural address and at the January 2010 London Conference—including on topics such as on governance and accountability, rule of law, and economic and social development.

Among the most important announcements will be the formal launch of an operational reintegration program, supported by an international trust fund. Additionally, the Department of Defense has been authorized to spend up to \$100 million to support initial Afghan reintegration efforts. Achieving a durable and favorable resolution of the conflict will require the Afghan Government to increasingly address the Afghan people's grievances and economic needs. This includes the sizable number of insurgents who are not affiliated with al-Qaeda and have been attracted to the insurgency for nonideological reasons. President Obama discussed reintegration and reconciliation with President Karzai when he visited Washington in May. We welcomed the Afghan Government's plan to host a Consultative Peace Jirga with a representative group of Afghan society to discuss the details of this reintegration plan and broader outreach efforts. We are now supporting the Afghan Government's efforts to implement several Jirga outcomes.

During President Karzai's recent visit, President Obama reiterated that our support for Afghan-led reintegration and reconciliation is based on a shared commitment to full transparency and basic principles. Insurgents must: (1) cut ties to al-Qaeda; (2) cease violence against the Afghan state; and (3) accept the Afghan Constitution, including its protections for human rights and women's equality. Our position on this last point is unambiguous. Afghan-led peace efforts must not be a vehicle for reversing the progress of Afghan women and girls since 2001. As Secretary Clinton reiterated during President Karzai's visit, "it is essential that women's rights and women's opportunities are not sacrificed or trampled on in the reconciliation process." We will not abandon Afghanistan's women.

Another important outcome of the Kabul Conference will likely be the announcement of a joint NATO-Afghan Government provincial transition plan. In April, ISAF partners and allies endorsed a decisionmaking framework to discuss with the Afghan Government. NATO Senior Civilian Ambassador Mark Sedwill has been coordinating with Afghan ministers to outline a detailed mechanism. Transition will not be a single event, nor will it represent the end of the international military and civilian assistance to the Afghan Government in a particular province. Instead, transition will be a process by which the Afghan Government assumes greater responsibility for security. As conditions improve on the ground, the Afghan Government will be able to provide improved services in key districts at the subnational level.

In this context, it is also important to understand the meaning of July 2011. As President Obama, Secretary Clinton, and Secretary Gates have made clear, July 2011 is not a withdrawal date for all U.S. combat forces. In the President's words, we will not "be switching off the lights and closing the door behind us." While in July 2011 we will begin reducing U.S. combat troop levels, the size of and timing of any reduction in forces will be determined after a thorough assessment that will account for the views of the Afghan Government, as well as our ISAF allies and partners. The eventual pace of the reduction in U.S. combat troops will depend on the conditions on the ground. And even then, our partnership with the Afghan Government and Afghan people will not end.

As President Obama explained during his joint press conference with President Karzai on May 12, "Even as we begin to transition security responsibility to Afghans over the next year, we will sustain a robust commitment in Afghanistan going forward . . . will partner with the Afghan people for the long term—toward a future of greater security, prosperity, justice, and progress." The shape of this long-term commitment will be clarified in coming months as we negotiate a new Strategic Partnership with the Afghan Government. The Strategic Partnership will provide a framework for transitioning to a more normal bilateral relationship with the Afghan Government. Discussions will focus on themes critical to the U.S.-Afghanistan relationship, including our long-term commitment of security and economic assistance. We have committed to consult Afghanistan's neighbors and key partners as part of these deliberations, and will also keep Congress fully informed.

Equally important will be a sustained international commitment to supporting the Afghan Government. Parallel to our negotiation of a new U.S.-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership, we will consult with our ISAF allies and partners, encouraging them to publicly commit to: (1) continued assistance for training and equipping Afghanistan's security forces; and (2) providing long-term development assistance. This long-term commitment is the only way to ensure that our gains are durable and that Afghanistan does not once again become a safe haven from which extremists plot attacks on our homeland.

Prudent planning for the future should not be mistaken for a lack of commitment to our ongoing civ-mil efforts. I outlined our civilian initiatives when I appeared before this committee in January and presented the Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy. Over the past 6 months, General Petraeus and I have further synchronized our civilian and military plans by continuing a series of civilian-military coordination sessions. In April, we convened for 2 days in Kabul with the entire civ-mil Embassy-ISAF team, President Karzai, and his senior ministers to review our progress and further refine our programs. We agreed to reconvene in this format again in October. As General Petraeus has now transitioned to a new role as COMISAF, our close collaboration has intensified on a range of issues, including support for Afghan-led reintegration and a sustainable approach to increasing electricity production for Kandahar.

Like many of you, I have traveled outside of Kabul over the past 6 months to see our civ-mil efforts firsthand. Contrary to some press accounts, our civilians have surged. More than 1,000 USG civilian employees from 10 departments and agencies are now serving in Afghanistan, with a goal of further increasing the civilian presence by as much as 20 percent by the end of 2010. Many of these civilians are de-

ployed on the front lines, working and living in the same dangerous conditions as our combat troops in places like Kandahar and Marjah. Each civilian in the field often employs up to 10 Afghan partners. They are engaged in a range of activities, from rebuilding Afghanistan's once vibrant agricultural sector, to working with key Afghan ministries to improve provision of health, education, justice, and other services outside of provincial capitals.

We have committed to providing enhanced levels of oversight and to working with the Afghan Government to improve the transparency and accountability of its ministries. Key to these efforts has been a reduction of our reliance on large international contractors and establishment of an accreditation process for Afghan ministries to receive increased direct assistance if they improve transparency, oversight, and accountability. These measures help us manage the risk we assume by working in such a complex environment.

We have also engaged in a clear-eyed discussion with President Karzai on the challenges of corruption—including on the question of how the United States and other international donors can ensure that our contracting practices do not contribute to it. President Karzai identified corruption as a major concern in his inaugural address and we support steps he has taken to begin addressing this problem. These include issuing a Presidential Decree in March 2010 that provided the USAID-supported High Office of Oversight additional investigative powers. It also outlined a process, which we are supporting, for establishing a Monitoring and Evaluation Committee on corruption comprised of Afghan and international experts. Along with other U.S. assistance to the Major Crimes Task Force and Afghanistan's judiciary, we are helping the Afghan Government implement additional safeguards aimed at reducing corruption.

For sure, we face many other challenges to achieving our civilian goals in Afghanistan, including a resilient insurgency and limited, albeit increasing Afghan Government capacity. But we are beginning to see initial results from our new strategy in several areas. We plan to provide a more detailed overview of these results later this year, but let me cite a few brief examples:

- USAID's agriculture voucher program, launched in September 2009, has distributed wheat seed to more than 366,000 farmers, trained 80,000 Afghan farmers in best practices, and employed over 70,000 Afghans on short-term rural infrastructure projects. In many places throughout the Afghanistan's south, these programs are increasingly being administered under the auspices of the Afghan Ministry of Agriculture, whose extension agents receive training from forward-deployed USDA and USAID agriculture advisors.
- In 2009, we shifted our counternarcotics strategy away from eradication, which did little to reduce poppy cultivation and pushed poor farmers into the Taliban's hands. Our new counternarcotics strategy is comprehensive, combining: law enforcement; intelligence; interdiction; demand reduction; regional coordination; and alternative livelihoods programs. Since implementing it, we have seen significant increases in: the number of drug labs destroyed; the numbers of drug traffickers arrested; the amounts of opium, poppy, heroin, and morphine base seized; and the number of joint operations with Afghan forces. Civilian DEA agents are helping to train Afghan Counternarcotics Police, and working with Afghan personnel to identify and destroy narco-trafficking networks. In the first quarter of 2010, international and Afghan forces conducted 56 military and law-enforcement interdiction operations in Afghanistan, largely in the south. These operations destroyed 16.3 metric tons (MT) of opium, 195 kilograms of morphine, 1.2 MT of heroin, 9.8 MT of hashish and, 10.1 MT of precursor chemicals.
- We are working to restore cellular service in areas where the Taliban has destroyed or deactivated towers. One of our civilians embedded with the Marines in Nawa, Helmand province reported that soon after a local cell tower resumed operation "three cell phone shops opened in the district bazaar and SIM cards were available in the whole of the district—without involvement from the Marines or U.S. civilians. Farmers now call their relatives in the district and provincial capitals to see if prices make it worthwhile to transport their goods. Families can warn each other about influxes of Taliban or mines on the road." Cell service has recently been extended to Marjah and Garmsir, with similar economic and security benefits. In the coming months, ISAF and our Embassy will work to create a backup network in areas where the Taliban shuts down private carriers. This will provide uninterrupted access for Afghans, improving security for communities as well as our own civilian and military personnel.

Indeed, Afghans in areas previously dominated by the Taliban are slowly supporting the Afghan Government. They are appreciative of the improvements that our civilian programs are bringing to their communities. When I met with a group

of elders during my recent visit to Marjah, they expressed gratitude for our agricultural support. They also underscored the great personal risks they were undertaking to stand up against the Taliban.

Ultimately, our goal is to empower the Afghan Government so that it is in the strongest possible position as Afghan-led political and economic efforts move forward. This will require continued progress by the Afghan Government and continued international support. It is important to remember that we are not alone in this endeavor. Since President Obama spoke at West Point on December 1, ISAF allies and partners have provided roughly 10,000 additional troops and several hundred additional trainers to support security efforts. More than 60 countries are providing civilian assistance to Afghanistan. Under the highly capable leadership of U.N. Special Representative Staffan de Mistura and Ambassador Sedwill, members of the international community are increasing their coordination on the ground and in the implementation of their programs. They are focusing on Afghan priorities and implementing them in a way that builds Afghan Government capacity.

Simultaneously, we are engaging India, Russia, China, and the Central Asian republics to discuss ways that they can support regional stability while ensuring their legitimate interests. And building on President Obama's June 2009 speech in Cairo, my team has made it a top priority to increase Muslim countries' support for Afghanistan. Their contributions carry political weight beyond providing positive effects on the ground. To cite only a few of many examples:

- The UAE, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia have posted their first resident Ambassadors to Kabul. Seven Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) countries participate in the international SRAP support group.
- Turkey has greatly expanded its training of the Afghan National Security Forces.
- The UAE has expanded financial assistance and is funding several innovative initiatives.
- Malaysia and Egypt have committed important medical resources. It is hard to overstate the practical and symbolic influence of Muslim women doctors treating Afghan patients.

As President Obama, Secretary Clinton, and General Petraeus have emphasized, our civilian mission is crucial to the progress of our overall strategy in Afghanistan. Additionally, our civilian programs provide a foundation for our long-term commitment to helping the Afghan people rebuild from 30 years of endless war. While our military mission in Afghanistan is not open-ended, our civilian commitment will endure long after our combat troops come home. It is essential that we remain focused on our objectives and adapt our strategy to conditions on the ground, while also allowing time for our new programs to demonstrate progress.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to a continued dialogue on these issues and am pleased to take your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, thank you, Ambassador Holbrooke.

I think we'll go with 7-minute rounds. We have a fair number of Senators, and I want to give everybody a chance to get their questions in.

Share with us, if you would, what you see as the major impediments to a more rapid sense of progress in the governance issues, the local governance issues, as well as the top-down Kabul-to-the-local-districts components of this. And particularly, looking at something like the Marjah offensive and the lessons we might learn from that, what can you share with us, marks a sign of progress there, and—and/or what are the hurdles that you're struggling through that you see the potential of resolving with respect to that?

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. The impediments, Mr. Chairman, are extraordinary. The sheer capacity of the government and its personnel, the risks that—

The CHAIRMAN. I assume you mean the absence of capacity.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Yes. The sheer capacity problem. To get qualified Afghans, after 30 years of war, is very difficult. A handful—a relative handful of people from the diaspora have returned to help their country, but there's so much talent, at coun-

tries like the United States and others, of Afghan Americans who are living here, I would love it if more of them would help their government. But, to go back and work for the—

The CHAIRMAN. Why are they not?

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Some did, but it's a very difficult problem. It's very dangerous. They're frustrated by the government structure. Corruption has been an impediment. And they're giving up a wonderful life here. We've talked to them. Some have—as you know, have gone back. Human resources is the most important variable.

You know, Ashraf Ghani has said to us, and I'm sure to you, that if you had 6,000 well-trained people, you could change it.

Second, the immense poverty of the country, the poorest non-African country in the world; the corruption issue; the history of the country; the illiteracy rate. You take the police, for example. For 7 years, for reasons I cannot understand, the United States participated in training Afghan police, at vast expense, without giving them literacy training. We were turning out police with 88 percent illiteracy, and it went right by everyone. I wrote about it, as a private citizen. As soon as I was given this job, we went at it. And with the support of my then-counterpart, General Petraeus, we made literacy training a mandatory part of the effort. But, how could that have been allowed to happen? How can you have a policeman who can't read an ID card?

Now, you mentioned Marjah. Marjah's uniquely difficult because, as those of you who have been there know, while it has a long legacy of interaction with the United States, it was the area where the Kennedy and Johnson and—Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations really put in the effort, and the people down there remember America very fondly. It's also been ground zero for the Taliban, and it's a very difficult area to operate in. And what the Taliban have done, Mr. Chairman, is targeted assassinations. It's a very tough problem.

So, the effort is multiple. Now, what are we doing about it? We have sent more than—we have more than tripled the American civilian presence, while always mindful of the issue you and I just discussed earlier of avoiding the dependency trap. We have particularly increased—increased by, in fact, 600-fold—our field presence. When I was in Marjah, 2 weeks ago, I saw the best civilian-military interaction I've ever seen in my experiences in wars like this. And I've seen more than my share. They really were working together seamlessly, under hellish conditions.

The tribal leaders I met with said, "We're glad you're back," referring all the way back to the Kennedy-Johnson era, "but we need agriculture, we need seeds, we need security. And we risked our lives to come meet with you today." And, in fact, as if to underline the point, while we were meeting at the tribal shura, two suicide bombers detonated themselves in the marketplace, who had apparently been waiting for our delegation, but, when we didn't go to the marketplace because we ran out of time, they went ahead and did their thing, anyway.

So, the point I want to underscore, Mr. Chairman, is how difficult it is in a place like Marjah. That doesn't mean it's impossible, but it will take time, and it will take resources.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, let me ask—if Marjah was difficult, is Kandahar going to be any easier?

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Yes, I think it will. I think Marjah was really, really extraordinary. And you've been there, you know that it is so remote and isolated, and yet it's so—it's viewed as so critical, in strategic terms—

The CHAIRMAN. What I worry about the Kandahar operation is that, you know, prior to American troops announcing they were going to go in, there were not assassinations, there was not a level of violence. The mere announcement has now brought on the process of assassination and intimidation. And I doubt that we're going to have a sufficient level of troops to be able to, "pacify the city." I'm unsure of the strategy, to be honest with you, and I wonder if you can help us understand exactly where we're heading in that regard.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Mr. Chairman, first let me be clear, Marjah is not Fallujah. Marjah is not going to be a battle for the city for exactly the—

The CHAIRMAN. No, that's not Kandahar.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE [continuing]. Excuse me—Kandahar will not be a battle for the city, like Fallujah. And you, yourself, just made that point, and I want to underscore it.

Second, General Petraeus is currently doing his own strategic review. It would be premature of me, not having talked to him about this issue in a couple of weeks, and about to see him, to give you a more detailed statement, but I am—your perception is one that I'm fully aware of and, I think, basically, has great merit.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, Mr. Ambassador, as I finish up my time here, I'd just say to you that if, as you and I believe—and I think you do—I know you do believe this—Pakistan is central to the resolution, and if, as we all know, there isn't a military solution, but you need a political one, it seems to me that the greatest pressure comes, maybe, possibly, with Kandahar, but certainly not in the absence of pressure on the western part of Pakistan, which we're struggling with the Pakistanis to get to be a sufficient level. But, if that doesn't meet with some kind of barrier or some sort of military presence, which I think has been withdrawn from the area to some degree on the other side of that border, the immediate part of that border, I think it sort of undermines what we're trying to get the Pakistanis to do. I'm not sure you can do both. Maybe General Petraeus has a view of how that can happen. But, it seems to me that that review is perhaps well, you know, that it's appropriate.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Well, let's see what he comes up with, Mr. Chairman. For our part, our focus on Pakistan is based on the fact that we recognize—and this has not been recognized in the past—that Pakistan has legitimate security interests in its neighbor, with an undefined border, and those have to be taken into account; but, at the same time, nobody is saying that Pakistan has the right to determine what happens next door. It is simply that they—we hope they can get along, and we've been encouraging that. And we believe that recent dialogue between Islamabad and Kabul has been beneficial.

As for the situation on the border, General McChrystal, and now General Petraeus, have repeatedly traveled to Islamabad. General Petraeus made his first trip, in his new job, to Islamabad just a few days ago. The coordination between GHQ and Pakistan and ISAF headquarters in Kabul, virtually nonexistent a year ago, is now well advanced. Is it as far advanced as it should be? No, sir. But, it is moving in that direction. And Admiral Mullen will be also traveling out to the region in the near future to move that forward, as I will be when I visit, in a few days.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, Mr. Ambassador, I want to just congratulate you on the efforts you've made, which have really been unprecedented. I don't think I can recall anytime in any war, certainly not in Iraq or otherwise, where the kind of coordinated effort took place to bring civilian and military leaders here to Washington, and to meet in the kind of concerted way that we did. That several-day meeting, I think, was exceedingly helpful. The key now is, obviously, translating it to their followthrough and execution over there. But it certainly laid some important groundwork.

And I also want to say to you that I think you are really onto something. The complications of India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, we all know very, very well. It is very, very difficult, with years and years of history, suspicion, conflict, paranoia. But, if that can somehow be managed, that may be, by far, the most effective way to resolve this conflict. I think you know that, and I think you're pursuing it. But, that is perhaps the avenue of greatest potential nonmilitary resolution, and I really wish you well with that, because I think it is critical to the outcome.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Lugar.

Senator LUGAR. Ambassador Holbrooke, at the risk of oversimplifying the history of the situation, in 1998 we had two of our Embassies in Africa attacked by, apparently, al-Qaeda cells. This was a severe shock. But Afghanistan was different, because al-Qaeda had training camps there that were protected by the Taliban. From those camps came attacks upon New York City and Washington, DC. We went to war because the Taliban refused to give up the al-Qaeda camps, and that began the war that we're discussing today.

Now, many Americans reading about al-Qaeda today would say that a good number of them probably reside in Pakistan, and therefore they would accept the fact that the two neighboring countries have to be considered together. It should be noted that al-Qaeda has the potential of basing operations far beyond the borders of Afghanistan and Pakistan. For instance, the New York Times had a Sunday story in their magazine about Yemen. The suggestion was that Yemen might be such a place. This is because of, among other things, the country's remoteness and the central government's continued difficulty in addressing political unrest there. Others have suggested Somalia because of the overall lack of governance that has plagued the country for several years, which has endured in part because of intruding elements from neighboring states.

The point that I'm making is that we started in Afghanistan because we thought that's where al-Qaeda was, and we wanted to

disrupt any further activity that might threaten us in the United States of America. Now, 10 years later, as we've all pointed out, we are still there. My point in raising these questions about metrics was—and you've answered this in part—perhaps in the future they could lend us credible evidence that President Karzai's efforts have been successful, and that a central government has been formed which possesses reasonable ability to maintain law and order within the country and repel outside forces. They could also quantify that the United States and our allies are doing a great number of good things with regard to improving the country's agriculture, strengthening its economy, and so forth. This is at least a possible scenario.

But, as you pointed out, it's not quite that simple, because President Karzai will continually be under pressure from those in Pakistan who say that, after all, Afghanistan is a legitimate security interest of ours, not just because it's a neighbor, but, because it is seen by some Pakistani leaders as contested territory with their perceived adversary India. Furthermore, they note that Taliban from Pakistan come over into Afghanistan and vice versa. Right now, President Karzai appears to be dealing with some types of Taliban hopefully trying to define those with whom he can work as opposed to the other elements that are not willing to negotiate. Even as we engage in Kandahar and pursue success in our engagement, once again, at this time it is hard to tell what the definition of success may be. We will need metrics to quantify, for example, the effects upon any elements in the city as our operations proceed and after they conclude, especially among those who do not wish either the United States or even Afghanistan itself well.

I'm coming to the conclusion that fighting al-Qaeda through trying to reform or reshape Afghanistan may not have been where we should have started or hoped to have finished. The question is, How do we best address our threats and interests in Afghanistan without broadening that mandate and move on?

I raise this because at the beginning of the Obama administration, the President called some of us around the table. He discussed the withdrawal from Iraq, and some persons in attendance, who shall remain nameless, said, "Mr. President, get a sharper pencil. July 1 of this year is too long." Well, the President stuck to the plan and we are, in fact, withdrawing. But, right now we don't have a strong government in Iraq. The Parliament is there, but has only met once since a legitimate election. This is a tough endeavor, and similar difficulties will continue to emerge in Afghanistan.

I think we really have to begin to define our objectives because the wealth of the United States is not limitless, nor are the casualties of our forces and the number of people we have available. The thought that we can meander on without calibrating metrics on the basis of which we can define success unacceptable.

So, I am hopeful that at some point after the Kabul Conference, you and the Secretary of State and others will bring us clarity of what is going to be an acceptable definition of success in Afghanistan. At the same time, we must worry about the threat al-Qaeda poses to Yemen, Somalia, and all sorts of other places. We must also consider strategies, a different strategy, for dealing with al-Qaeda cells throughout the world, as opposed to sending tens of

thousands of forces and trying to revamp the country in question. I hope you can sharpen the focus a little bit as to what might come out of the upcoming conference. It is possible that clarifying the future with regard to our efforts in Afghanistan is premature right now, and that the release of the commander's review in December signifies the time at which these issues should be addressed. But, in order to have the continuing strong support of the Congress and the American people, a better sense of success, and a real definition of the term as it applies to Afghanistan are going to be required.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Senator, first of all, there's no part of your analysis that I would take issue with. Now, let me address your specific points.

First, quickly, the Kabul Conference. The Kabul Conference is going to have several focuses, but the one I want to draw our attention to is the reintegration program, which has finally been announced, and which is now—the money has been assembled, a good chunk of money—and we all agree, there's no final military solution to this war, there has to be a way to get Taliban fighters off the battlefield, and this is the route.

Second, you mentioned the December review process. That is a review process, and the President will look at how the policy is done and make his own judgments. It would be inappropriate for me to foreshadow it, but we're ready, thinking—you asked, earlier, not to wait until December. As a matter of fact, only this week and last week, I've sat down with my colleagues at the National Security Council staff, and we've talked about how to do this. And we will be continuing that discussion in Kabul next week with Secretary Clinton and myself and General Petraeus and Ambassador Eikenberry. And, in addition, we are going to have another one of our civilian-military exercises in Kabul, in the fall, one that David Petraeus and I planned before he took his current assignment.

Second point concerns our—the fact that our commitment—our combat commitment in Afghanistan is not open-ended, a point you made, which we all agree with. There's been a lot of dispute about what July 2011 means, and you will—you mentioned it in your opening statement; you raised some questions about it.

So, with your permission, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to address that absolutely critical issue.

What the President said was clear. He was going to send additional troops to Afghanistan and then, in July of next year, he would begin careful withdrawals, in accordance with the situation, but withdrawals would begin. The size, scope, timing, pace, and an endpoint for combat troop presence has not been decided on, nor would it be appropriate to decide on it when troops are still arriving in the country and when issues like the situations that Chairman Kerry just mentioned, in Marjah and Kandahar, are still in a very intense phase. But, we're looking at it continually.

Second, and most importantly, from my point of view, since this team behind me and myself have been charged, not with the military operations, but with the civilian support of those military operations, it has been stated flatly, by the President and the Secretary of State and others of us, that there will be a continued economic and development assistance, Congress permitting, and

continued support for training of the army and police, Congress permitting, beyond the combat troop presence.

Senator Levin, in your other committee, has made very clear how much importance he attaches to it, as have you and Chairman Kerry and others. I cannot stress how important this is, because Afghanistan cannot go forward unless the international community, led by its greatest nation, the United States, continues to fulfill its commitments in the area, beyond combat troops. Now, it's obviously much cheaper, and it's obviously something that can only occur as the police and army are trained and able to stand on their own feet.

And, as for economic and development assistance, that's essential. What happened in 1989, when the Soviets left and the world, led by the United States, just turned its back on Afghanistan and watched the liberation of eastern Europe, never recognizing that the fall of communism had begun in Afghanistan, never recognizing we had a commitment, is a lesson of history we cannot afford to repeat. And it was a direct line from the 1989 decisions to 9/11. And we all know the history here.

So, I want to stress what 9/11—what July 2011 is, and is not, Senator, and the importance of continuing it.

And, in terms of your saying "sharpen our pencils," I will take this pencil with me, and it is very sharp, and we will continue to drill down. As both you and Chairman Kerry have said, we are fully committed to this effort.

Senator LUGAR. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Feingold.

Senator FEINGOLD. I'd like to welcome Ambassador Holbrooke. It's, of course, always great to see you.

And I want to thank Chairman Kerry for calling this hearing today. It reminds us that our engagement with Afghanistan can and must extend beyond military operations. I'd like to add, given the questions raised about whether further changes are needed to our leadership team in Afghanistan, I think all of us should think carefully before calling for the replacement of those whose assessments on the ground have provided candid insights, including the assessment of our Ambassador in Kabul, that adding more troops will only increase instability. And I think the time has come for the President to set a flexible timetable for responsibly drawing down our troops so that we can focus on pursuing a sustainable global strategy to combat al-Qaeda. We've been talking about the countries of Somalia and Yemen, here, for almost 10 years on this committee, and yet somehow we get focused on an Afghanistan, we get focused on an Iraq, and we've never seriously addressed these other places, despite the repeated warnings that have been available ever since 9/11.

Ambassador Holbrooke, I'm pleased that President Obama did, at least, set the start date for the redeployment of the troops, although I think a start date alone is insufficient. People in Wisconsin agree. And a new CBS News poll found that 54 percent of respondents now say the United States should set a timetable for the withdrawal of United States troops from Afghanistan.

Secretary Clinton, here before us, has suggested it'll take 3 to 5 years to transition control to Afghan security forces. I think that timeframe's too long. But, I'd ask you to just comment again—I know you were already saying a little bit in response to Senator Lugar—but wouldn't it be helpful for the President to at least lay out a flexible timetable for maintaining United States troops in Afghanistan, to address not only the concerns among the American people, but the concerns among the Afghan population, that this should not be an open-ended occupation?

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. First of all, Senator Feingold, it's a pleasure to see you again. And I'm not entirely surprised at your question. It's one you and I have discussed before in other forum.

I have to, respectfully, say that I am very leery of setting a date certain, made here, for the absolute withdrawal of our support to the Afghan police and army. Now—

Senator FEINGOLD. But, you heard my question, my friend.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. You were talking about—

Senator FEINGOLD. I said "a flexible timetable."

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. OK.

Senator FEINGOLD. I did not say—

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. But, then—

Senator FEINGOLD [continuing]. A hard and fast—

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. But, then you talked—OK. So, I want to be clear, then, so you and I are on the same wavelength, because it's very important. When you say "a flexible timetable," you want to set a notional end date, but you're willing to reexamine it?

Senator FEINGOLD. I don't want—actually, I would rather not set it; that's not my job. I'm asking the President—

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. OK.

Senator FEINGOLD [continuing]. The administration—to give us a vision, with some time guidelines, about when they think the troops can come out of Afghanistan. No, I think it's much more—

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. You're talking about the combat troops.

Senator FEINGOLD. Yes.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. OK. That is above my paygrade. I thought we were talking about the other parts of our presence there. But, I think we have to start by understanding several things about this extraordinarily difficult country that fate and destiny has placed us in. It's not where you choose to fight to defend the American homeland. It's the most remote logistical place the United States has ever fought in its history, a landlocked country which is very difficult to resupply in under these extraordinary conditions.

But, given that fact, and given the direct correlation between Afghanistan and our homeland security—and I should be more precise; Afghanistan, Pakistan, and our homeland security—I am very leery about setting an end date at this point. But, I must leave that to the President after he's done the review.

I do not have any problem with July 2011, in reference to the earlier colloquy I had with Senator Lugar. The idea here was quite clear: to tell the world and the Afghans that we do not have an open-ended, limitless Vietnam-type escalation. When I got to Vietnam, we had 10,000 troops. When I left, we had 500,000. At least two members of your committee were there, under much more dan-

gerous circumstances. And we cannot repeat that. And President Obama was very conscious of that.

At the same time, I stress again why this isn't Vietnam. This is about our national security. Vietnam was not. And if our national security requires us to continue to fight because you have organizations like the TTP in western Pakistan training people like the Times Square bomber—luckily, training him quite badly—and declaring that they wish to target the United States, in addition to al-Qaeda's targeting, we cannot be oblivious to that.

Now, both you and Senator Lugar mentioned Somalia and Yemen. It is not correct—this is not my area, but I follow it, and it is not quite correct to say the United States is ignoring it or has no plans in it. We are taking actions in it—and the New York Times article, which you referred to, Senator Lugar, was very clear. It began with a drone strike, which was very effective in taking out an al-Qaeda group in Yemen. And that article was—it was a very interesting article, but we—the al-Qaeda and other organizations, like the TTP, are specifically targeting us, and we cannot ignore them.

Senator FEINGOLD. Ambassador, let me just switch to another question before my time runs out.

United States civilian strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan pledges support for the Afghan Government reintegration efforts for Taliban and other fighters. And you touched on this, but how have the Karzai administration's efforts at reintegration—the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program plan and the Consultative Peace Jirga—translated, so far, on the ground, in terms of rolling out this plan in the initial districts where it's envisioned?

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. The rollout has not yet reached the provinces and districts, Senator Feingold. That is the next phase. We do have, as I think I mentioned, maybe before you arrived—we have put \$100,000 with—\$100 million, with Congress' approval, of CERP funds, at the disposal of General Petraeus and ISAF, to do this through ISAF, but the main route for doing this—what you and I called “reintegration”—is through the Afghan Government and the trust funds, which the British and the Japanese have led, to which the United States did not contribute. The Japanese took the lead.

It is our absolute goal, highest priority, to urge and encourage and press the Afghan Government to fulfill its already-stated commitment to put reintegration officials in every one of the contested districts in the country immediately, and to support them with logistics and make this plan work. Because every day, under the intense pressure that ISAF has put on the Taliban, there are people contacting local authorities and saying, “We want to get out of this war, we want to have—we want to have land, we want to have a job we're—we don't have any ideological commitment to Mullah Omar or the Taliban.” And up to now, there was no way they could do it. And it's only now that, with this program—and the program is—just been unveiled, so this—again, to me, this is the most important new development, and this is one of the main things that Secretary Clinton will focus on, on her trip.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Feingold.

Senator Corker.

Senator CORKER. Mr. Chairman, thank you. I—and I want to thank the Ambassador for coming. I know he has a wealth of knowledge, and certainly has served our country for many years—

A number of us wrote a letter to you, asking for this hearing—and my guess, is you might have had hearings anyway—but, the reason we wrote the letter—bipartisan letter—was to provide Congress and the American people with a definition of the “end state” for our civilian operations in Afghanistan, clear objectives for the civilian mission, and a detailed plan for achieving those objectives, and the very specific, measurable metrics being used to measure progress toward achieving those objectives.

I have to say, I’ve been here for an hour and 10 minutes, I have heard nothing—nothing about that. And, while I respect the Ambassador—I’ve heard a lot about process, I’ve heard a lot about meetings—I have no earthly idea—no earthly idea what our objectives are on the civilian front. And I don’t know if you have time to begin doing that right now, but this has, so far, been an incredible waste of time, from the standpoint of hearing those.

And I have tremendous respect for you, but maybe we have the wrong witness. I hope we’ll have, maybe, Secretary Clinton and Eikenberry, maybe Crocker—I know he’s supposed to come. But, could you answer the question that was the purpose of these hearings in the first place?

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. I’m sorry, you don’t feel that I’ve told you what our civilian—

Senator CORKER. You’ve told me—

Ambassador HOLBROOKE [continuing]. Programs are?

Senator CORKER [continuing]. A lot of process. I’d like to know, with definition, what our end state is for civilian operations—the very question we asked when we set this hearing up—is, in Afghanistan, clear objectives for the civilian mission, a detailed plan for achieving those. I’d like to hear you talk about that.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Well—

Senator CORKER. I mean, I’d glad—I mean, we have a lot of interagency folks here, but I’m not hearing anything that talks about where we’re going.

I’d also like to know how the withdrawal date that’s been set affects that, and how it affects those we’re working with in the—

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Well—

Senator CORKER [continuing]. Country.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. First of all, Senator Corker, I believe I have discussed our civilian programs in very considerable detail, within the constraints of time. But we did prepare a report for this committee, earlier this year, which was entered into the record, and which I will be happy to enter into the record again, if you wish, and you can go through every one of the programs.

The reason I brought my colleagues with me was to show that this was a whole-of-government and unprecedented effort.

Now, on the specifics, since you want specifics, Afghanistan is an agricultural country. It exported agricultural products until 1978 and the Soviet invasion. We have—trying to rebuild it. This was not being done for the first 7 years of this war. We have—your committee has given us a great deal of money for agriculture, and

we are spending it wisely in a joint AID/USDA effort, which Senator Lugar has, particularly, been involved in—food, seeds, cash-for-work programs, encouraging alternatives to opium production.

Second, rule of law. We are spending the money you've authorized for us to create a justice system which can cut into the Taliban's propaganda about corruption and lack of a justice system.

Third, counternarcotics. We have ended poppy eradication, a radical change, because all we were doing by eradicating poppy seeds—poppy crops—was driving farmers—poor farmers—into the hands of the Taliban.

Fourth, a major program of subnational governance, where we are putting aid directly to the district level.

Fifth, a major effort in specific areas, some of which were alluded to earlier, such as electricity for Kandahar. Senator Kerry asked earlier about Kandahar. One of the major issues here is to bring electricity to the people as a benefit of the international presence.

The whole range of activities we have is designed to support the country and to support General Petraeus's counterinsurgency effort. He and I—I was his counterpart until 2 weeks ago, when he moved to Kabul. We have worked intimately in an effort to create a joint civilian/military effort.

And I am happy to provide you with every detail you wish, in private briefings, on behalf of me and my team.

Point No. 2, in regard to the end-state issue you raised. I want to be clear on the difference between "end state" and "exit strategy." If we—it—this is my personal view, Senator, but if we walk away from Afghanistan again, as we did 21 years ago, the consequences will be similarly catastrophic because of the unique strategic position of Afghanistan and the reaction that would have in Pakistan, China, India, and the country to Afghanistan's west—Iran—as well as the larger region—that includes Russia, Saudi Arabia, India—and even extending to Western Europe, which is concerned about terrorism from that region just as much as we are.

So, I hope that, when we talk about "end state," we talk about a sustainable end state which can—involves continued American economic and development assistance, and we continue to fulfill our obligations to train the police and the military. This will not be cheap, but it will be a fraction of the money that is now being authorized and appropriated for the military campaign.

When we will be able to transition to that is impossible for me, or anyone, to say, but it won't be on a single day; it will be a gradual process. And that is what the review in December and the President's decisionmaking will focus on.

Senator CORKER. You know, our foreign policy, generally speaking—I know we've had some rough times over the last several years—has been something that we've been able to address in a bipartisan way. And I think that the issues that you're dealing with, that we're dealing with, in Afghanistan are incredibly tough.

I still don't—I haven't understood what the administration was saying in the beginning. That's not to be critical of them; I just don't understand. I still don't understand. I've met with you and your staff over at the State Department. It's just incredibly vague to me. And I think what we are doing—we have partners, which include the Pakistanis and everybody around—that—they don't

know what we're doing, they don't know when we're leaving. They think we're leaving shortly, I think. We've just had colleagues who have come from there. We've got a President there that's having to play both sides, because he wants to survive, because he doesn't know what our intentions are. The Pakistanis don't know what our intentions are, I don't think, and they're making accommodations on both sides.

So, I just have to tell you, I send letters to parents and spouses, and what I feel, because of this lack of clarity, is that we are in Afghanistan because we're in Afghanistan, and that we don't have the will to be successful, and we don't have the will to leave, because of some of the things you just outlined. But, I just don't hear any clarity. And again, I want to support the administration, I want to support you, because that's what we need to do, as a country, is, at the shore's line, let the partisanship that—but, I have to tell you, as a person who wants to do that, I still don't understand. OK? And I have average intelligence.

So, I would ask you to please—or maybe let's have some witnesses in here that can shed more light or be more specific. But, I don't understand, and I'm very concerned, and I think we're sending a lot of mixed signals. And I think there's a lot of dissension, actually, as I listen to you, even within the administration itself; and that has to end.

And I'd just ask you, please—you have a lot of experience—help us understand. You haven't done that today.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Well—

Senator CORKER. And I would ask the chairman to please have some witnesses come in and explain to us what the end state is, what we can envision Afghanistan being whenever this withdrawal does take place, because I still do not understand. We've changed it. Now it's sort of a degraded country, where they have conflict, but it's not out of control. I mean, the bar continues to change.

And I'm just concerned, as an individual; and yet, I want us to be as—if we can, all on the same page, as much as possible; but, I think, to do that, this has got to be much clearer than has been outlined.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Senator, I'm sorry that my answers don't fully satisfy you, but I want to be very clear on this, because I understand your comments, and I respect them.

First of all, the core question, the one you're asked by your constituents and I'm asked by everybody, "Why are we in Afghanistan?" The short, simple answer is: 9/11, direct threats to our national security interests, and the fact that, while our enemies against our homeland are on the Pakistani side of the border, this is a single struggle, and we have to strengthen the Afghan Government and teach it to stand on its own feet over time, so that we can move forward while we do other things, that fall outside the scope of this hearing, to dismantle, deter, and defeat al-Qaeda.

Now, if you do not believe that it's a threat to the homeland, then we have an honest difference of opinion. But, I think the Times Square bombing incident shows clearly how dangerous that situation is.

Second, on the civilian mission, again, it's in support of a single civilian/military counterinsurgency mission. And we have bench-

marks, requested and required by the Congress and submitted to you, and our overarching goal here is always the same: to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda, and prevent its ability to threaten the United States. And we believe, all of us—and there is no division on this in the executive branch—that the situation we face out there is a direct threat. We believed that before the Times Square situation occurred, and I don't think anything could have proved it more vividly.

And to achieve this, we have to degrade the Taliban, as well, because they are part of the enemy's structure—a different part, but an integral part—that we face.

Now, the Afghan Government doesn't yet have the capacity to deal with this on its own. How could they, after 30 years of war? And so, the civilian part of it, the things I've just mentioned to you—police, government capacity, rule of law, subnational government, training provincial officials, women's empowerment, and a whole series of other major issues—are part of our civilian programs, and we're happy to come back up to your office—we appreciated your visit to us—and continue this dialogue.

Our civilian strategy is designed from keeping al-Qaeda at bay, and it's designed to help Afghan institutions establish conditions for stable governance. Our plan has these benchmarks, which have been briefed to you and your colleagues, and we're happy to discuss them in detail at any time.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Ambassador. Thank you, Senator. Senator Cardin.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador Holbrooke, thank you very much for your extraordinary service. We appreciate it very much. Always appreciate your appearing before our committee.

I want to, first, ask a followup question to Senator Feingold. We talk a lot about the July 2011 and the—as you put it, the beginning of a careful withdrawal. Well, the President made this announcement in late 2009. Can you just give us an update whether we are on target, as the administration had envisioned when these statements were made in late 2009, as to the careful withdrawal of our troops, or are we ahead of schedule? You seem to be somewhat optimistic on some of the progress that had been made, but would you—would you say that we are meeting the expectations that the administration set out when the President addressed this issue in late 2009?

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Are you talking about the December 1 speech, the West Point speech?

Senator CARDIN. Correct.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Senator, I appreciate your personal comments. In regard to your question, I do not want to give a optimism/pessimism report to you of that sort at this time. I'm about to go back out there again on my 15th trip. I'd like to report back. I think that there—significant elements of movement forward, in many areas, but I do not yet see a definitive turning point in either direction. And we now have a new and a tremendously dynamic commander on the ground—General Petraeus—and I'm looking forward to seeing him, for the first time in his new capacity. And I do—simply do not have a personal judgment on that issue now.

Senator CARDIN. Well, I do think we're entitled to be informed as to how well we are meeting the expected schedule that the President obviously had in mind when he gave his speech in December.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Well, excuse me for interrupting, I—perhaps we had a miscommunication. As I mentioned to Senator Corker in my previous answer, we have put forward the benchmarks, which you requested. We've briefed on those, and those go through the specific criteria, point by point by point.

Senator CARDIN. No—

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. And we can go back over them.

Senator CARDIN. No—

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. I thought you were addressing a—kind of a larger—

Senator CARDIN. No, I was—

Ambassador HOLBROOKE [continuing]. Almost intuitive answer.

Senator CARDIN. Well, what I'm trying to get is that—obviously, the President had certain expectations in mind as to where we would be in July 2011, when he made his speech in December 2009. I'm just trying to figure out whether we're on schedule to meet the expectations that the administration had when the speech was given.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. I guess my simplest answer to you would be, in some areas we're ahead of schedule, in other areas we're on schedule, in other areas there's much to be desired. And the—for example, the attrition rate for the army and the police has gone down. That is a really important factor. But, I honestly don't know whether it's seasonal, anecdotal, or it's sustained. We won't know for a while. That's why the President did not—does not want to pull this tree up by the roots every month and reexamine it. It has to nurture.

General Caldwell, in charge of the training, is in constant touch with us, and he's reporting how they're moving forward. Nothing is more important than getting the police and army up to sustainability.

On the other hand, as the colloquy with Senator Kerry indicated, in Marjah there are not enough judges, there are not enough local police yet, and people are being assassinated. And, as General McChrystal said publicly, Marjah is not gone quite at the pace expected, but it's moving forward, in the estimation of ISAF.

So, you have to take these, issue by issue. There is no single answer, yet, to this extraordinarily complicated situation.

The elements that I stressed in my opening statement, sir, involving the progress in Pakistan, should not be neglected. Pakistan is at least as important to our national security.

Senator CARDIN. And I understand that, and I understand that's not an easy issue. I'm just trying to judge whether we can expect the careful withdrawal that will begin in July, whether we're on target to accomplishing that.

Let me go on to the second point, and that is—we all talk about the ability of Afghanistan to control—that is, the security of its own people and to run a country with good governance and respect for human rights. I've expressed, previously, my concern that the United States aid and the international aid not be a source of

funds for corruption in Afghanistan, that there be accountability in these funds. And I know that the administration has set up certain accountabilities on the funds that are being made available.

I would like to add to that the information that Afghanistan has mineral wealth, and whether we are certain that these are not just fungible dollars, and therefore, the international assistance and United States assistance could be a source to fund a corrupt regime which robs the country of good governance which is absolutely essential. How can you assure me that we're making progress on the funds getting to its intended purpose and not being used for corruption?

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Senator, just one point on your previous question. I think I may have answered part of the question you asked prior to your arrival. I want—

Senator CARDIN. I was here from the beginning.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Oh, OK, then I—

Senator CARDIN. Promise, the whole time.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE [continuing]. Apologize. But, I want to underscore that the pace and scope of the drawdowns will depend on the situation.

Senator CARDIN. I heard you say that.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Yes, OK.

On the accountability and mineral wealth problems—very, very important issues—on accountability—and this committee has been really aggressive in pushing us on this, and we share your concern. When we came into these jobs, about 8.8 percent of all the aid money was going through the government, so 91 percent was bypassing it through NGOs, and that was undermining the government we were trying to strengthen. Yet, to funnel it all through the government ran the very serious risk of losing accountability.

So, we set out a plan, a timetable, year by year, to increase the amount of money that goes through the government. And we're now up in the high teens, and we hope to keep increasing it to 30, 40, and 50 percent. But, the accountability issue is critical.

We have accountability criteria for each ministry. Some ministries have been certified, others have not. For example, agriculture, the ministry—our most important nonsecurity program—the ministry hasn't been certified yet, because we don't feel their accounting will meet the GAO standards, the SIGAR standards, our own standards. So, this is a very, very tough issue for us. But, we have made accountability our hallmark, while also trying to build government capacity. There's sometimes a tension between those two.

On the mineral wealth issue reported in the New York Times, perhaps a little misleadingly, it's not a new discovery that Afghanistan is a wealthy mineral area. What is, however, new is that, with modern techniques, the extractive industries can reach areas that were quite remote. Afghanistan's mineral wealth, according to the U.S. Geological Survey, is very substantial. I'm not going to throw the numbers around that you read about in the New York Times, because I have no independent corroboration of those. But, there's no question about copper, lithium, and some very critical, strategically important, rare earth elements.

And we—the Defense Department has a group, under Paul Brinkley, a Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, that has been working on this. He has been working with us to work with AID, Ex-Im Bank, OPIC, and TDA, to make sure that we help the Afghan people, No. 1, develop those resources for the benefit of the people, strengthen their own economy through doing it, avoid the resource curse that has plagued so many oil-producing and copper-producing nations, and, finally, make sure that the United States has a level playing field. In the case of the famous copper mine at Aynak, China dominated that. There have been all sorts of questions about how they got that contract. They paid a lot more for it than any Western country would have paid, and so it was a strategic investment for them. They have the ability to do that in a way that we don't, and we're working hard on that.

I would be happy to brief you further on this, but, I do want to say one last thing about it. Secretary Clinton is personally engaged on this issue. And if I'm not mistaken, Ashraf Ghani probably talked to you about it, Mr. Chairman, as well, because it's a very important issue.

Senator CARDIN. Mr. Chairman, I'd just urge we have complete transparency—our government insists—on the mineral issues in that country.

The CHAIRMAN. Absolutely.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. We will insist on it.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. And we're going to—Senator, we're also—I think the Afghans are seriously considering joining up to the Extractive—

Senator CARDIN. EITI.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. EITC, yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Ambassador Holbrooke, I need to—

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. EITI, I apologize.

The CHAIRMAN. I need to apologize; I need to go to a meeting on the START agreement now. Senator Lugar will chair, in my absence, and Senator DeMint is recognized. I'll try and get back, if I can.

Senator DEMINT. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador Holbrooke, thank you, and your whole team behind you, for your service to our country. I recognize probably the most difficult diplomatic situation anyone could work in.

I'd like to ask just a couple of questions related to the civilian-political side of the equation in Afghanistan. My question really comes from a perspective of some folks who have been on the ground in Afghanistan over the last couple of years to—well, 3 or 4 years—as part of a religious group that's working through an NGO. And I've got a good friend who's been a part of that. A year and a half ago, he came back, after a long stay there, and one of his colleagues had been killed by the Taliban. There wasn't a lot of security. But, the enemy was clearly the Taliban. And the people were, at that time, more looking to the United States for protection. And the folks working through the NGO were afraid of the Taliban.

He just returned, and I had a good conversation with him last week after another long stay of working on the ground. But, the

situation has changed and deteriorated, in his mind, to the point where they fear the government now more than they do the Taliban, that government leaders are increasingly speaking out against non-Muslims in the country. And the bottom line from his perspective is, the deadline is defeating us, is that the people know we're leaving. Even if we make it somewhat flexible, we've made it clear that our commitment's not to finish the job, but to leave.

And this is not my own opinion, but one I'm getting from people working on the ground, that the people are developing alliances with the Taliban for protection, and other insurgents in the country. Government figures are developing stronger relationships with the Taliban, which is making them increasingly antagonistic to non-Muslims in the country. And all the alignment now, on the civilian side, is in expectation of America being gone. Even the government is moving more that way.

And we have a situation now where we've got soldiers fighting and dying there for a government that, if left to their own devices, might throw them in jail or even kill them for being non-Muslim. And so, after just listening to the conversation, first of all, it comes back to what you said before—and I was glad to hear you say that the deadline—that you don't agree with a deadline. But, the President, even though he's equivocated to some degree, has still left that out there, that that is his goal, to get out. And I agree somewhat with Senator Corker, in that we have not said, "Here is what we are going to achieve before we leave." We talk about a situation on the ground, but what are we going to achieve before we leave?

But, to—I know that's more of a question—or, I mean, a perspective than a real question, but I'd just like to hear your comment on what appears to be a deteriorating situation brought on by the presumption that the United States will be gone in a year, or in a year and some time period after that.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. I have no doubt, Senator, that your report of your friends and associates is accurate—a perception on their part—because I've heard the same things. You hear many different things about policy, from many different people. And the President's position has been misrepresented, whether intentionally or unintentionally, by a lot of people—journalists, columnists, leading public figures. But, I think it's quite clear he did not say, "We're withdrawing in July 2011." He said, "We're beginning withdrawing." And you heard one of your colleagues on the other side question that as being insufficient. Now you're questioning it as being too far. This is an issue in which there's a legitimate grounds for disagreement. But, I did not say I disagreed with the deadline. What I said was, this is what the deadline means, and the U.S. military command has supported and accepted this deadline, and has endorsed it, publicly.

Now, the deadline applies to combat troops. And it's not a deadline; it is the beginning of a departure. And the size and scope and end state of that departure will be determined by the situation on the ground, but it will begin. And that is to incentivize the local authorities in Kabul to take on their own responsibility for their— for solving this problem so it is not open-ended situation.

In that regard, the President will make specific decisions down the road after the—or—during or after the policy review. And he

will deal with that, based on what he hears from General Petraeus and the Command and Ambassador Eikenberry and the Embassy and other people advising him.

In terms of the reaction on the ground, Senator, I have a slightly different perception—but, again, it's hard to come by firm data—is—there have been many public opinion polls taken in Afghanistan, despite the conditions. They're all face-to-face, because telephones obviously won't do it. Every poll shows that less than 10 percent of the people support the Taliban. Less than 10 percent. ARD, ABC, BBC, the Charney Group, which briefed us the day before yesterday here in Washington, they all come up with the same number. A lot of the other people—nobody wants to return to the black years of the Taliban—the women, especially; they suffered so much, and they remember it so vividly.

On the other hand, they're not all satisfied with the services and support they get from the Kabul government. And Kabul itself, for reasons that go back to the discussion I had with some of your colleagues earlier, is not always capable of producing the right kind of human resources, infrastructure, and programs for this, and corruption and rule of law are huge problems.

But, if you look at every indicator—electricity, cell phones, roads, the GDP of the country, agricultural production—every one of these things has had a dramatic improvement. Last year, Afghanistan had a 22-percent growth in GDP, obviously against a very small base. That's nondrug, legitimate GDP, by the way.

So, I think that the situation is not quite as clear-cut as you say it is. As I said earlier, there are elements of movement in many areas. And if you go around Afghanistan, you see these extraordinary visions of women cooperatives and farmer efforts to rebuild and undo 30 years of war. We need to be able to continue to support those efforts as we go forward, even after the combat troops leave Afghanistan.

Senator DEMINT. Thank you, sir.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Thank you, sir.

Senator DEMINT. Thank you.

Senator LUGAR [presiding]. Thank you very much, sir.

Senator CASEY.

Senator CASEY. Thank you, Senator Lugar.

Ambassador, we welcome you again, and thank you for your service to the country.

I wanted to raise an issue that reminds me that—in Washington we use a lot of acronyms describing programs and agencies. Unfortunately, there's one acronym I think that a lot of Americans actually know what it is, and it's IEDs. And we've talked about this a number of times, and I appreciate your work on it. There are actually two. It's—the acronym IED, plus the acronym AN, for ammonium nitrate when we talk about improvised explosive devices. The question I have—well, let me just first set forth the predicate.

We've all been concerned about this issue, as you have, and I know the administration, at all levels, has. We introduced a resolution a couple of days ago that passed. A number of us were cosponsors of that—Senator Webb, along with me and several other colleagues. And what we asked for in that—or, I should say, what we set forth as the reason for the resolution was the following: No. 1,

urging the Governments of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and other central Asian countries to fully commit to regulating the sale, transport, and use of ammonium nitrate, the main destructive ingredient in the IEDs; second, calling on the Secretary of State to continue to diplomatically engage—she and your team has already done this, but more needs to be done; third, to work with the World Customs Organization and other bodies on initiatives to improve the controls on IEDs; and then, fourth, urging the Secretary of State to work with Pakistan, Afghanistan, and central Asian countries to encourage and support improvements in infrastructure.

So, the question I have is—I realize that this resolution has been passed recently, but the question I have is, give us a status report as to how our government, and especially the State Department, has been already engaged in fulfilling those objectives, and what you can tell us about it. Because we have a basic problem, where you have a legal prohibition on ammonium nitrate in Afghanistan, but a huge problem in Pakistan that is both a problem of law, but also a problem of figuring out ways to stop the inflow of ammonium nitrate into Afghanistan from Pakistan.

And the numbers are stunning. I mean, we know that it's—IEDs are the—by far, the biggest killer. Pennsylvania, just since the beginning of the year, we've lost six soldiers, four as a result of IEDs. We're over 51 killed in action in Pennsylvania, and over 270 wounded. So, I just wanted to get your latest update and give us the benefit of that.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Senator Casey, I share your concern, I share your astonishment that so little was done on this in the past, and I want to commend you and Senator Webb for continuing to push. And in the privacy of this room, I would urge you to continue to do it, because this is a really critical issue, and your public pressure has helped those of us who share the concern.

The Pentagon has a task force on this—on the IED issue, as you know, headed by Ashton Carter. And we're working with him.

As far as ammonium nitrate goes—AN—we were successful in getting the Afghan Government to issue a Presidential decree banning the import, production, transportation, use, and sale, and storage of AN fertilizer. However, it is still legal to bring it in for mining and construction sectors, as you well know. And that's a major—that's a legitimate use. And there are not adequate alternatives, except something like dynamic, which brings similar problems with it.

We do not have enough action, yet, on the Pakistani side of the border. And here is a perfect example of why the two countries cannot be disaggregated for purposes of policy. We got what we wanted on one side of the border, but we haven't gotten it on the other yet, and Americans are being killed and wounded because of this. And I can assure you that we will take this up again when I go to Pakistan in a few days, and other senior officials go, as well.

I don't know if we need to go any further with that answer now, because you and I have spent so much time on it. But, I'm glad we got a chance to raise it in public and to assure you that this administration has task forces and puts it as a priority, and we will continue to do so.

Senator CASEY. Thank you, and I appreciate that. We'll continue to push on our end, as well. And I know—I failed to mention Senator Kaufman was also one of our cosponsors.

I wanted to go to the question of President Karzai. I don't have much time left, but I do want to raise this question. You say, on page 3 of your testimony, "We expect"—and I'm quoting, "We expect that President Karzai will address commitments he made in his November 2009 inaugural address." I and others have been very critical of his leadership, or sometimes what can only be described as lack of leadership. I don't expect you to evaluate my analysis. But, I guess I'd ask you—and I think the American people have a real concern about—they know it's an uneasy alliance and there are all kinds of problems, but I guess the one question I'd ask you is, What are the—how should we measure his performance, based upon those commitments? What are the signals or the signs or the substantive achievements or goals that he should meet that you are most interested in, in terms of advancing our mission there? I realize that we have been frustrated sometimes, and I realize that we can't expect perfection, but I think we need some way to measure progress, and I wanted to get your sense of what indicators you are most interested in.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. I think, in specific regard to your question, which focused not on the government or the war, but one individual, I think, as chief executive of the country, the way to evaluate him is the way you evaluate any chief executive. Does he lay out a clear program? He did. Does he fulfill his own deadlines? Sometimes. And are the programs he lays out effective? Sometimes.

I'm not here to plead on his behalf, or to criticize him, but only to point out what we all know, which is that he may have the hardest job of any chief executive in the world, because of the complexities and poverty of the country. The programs he has laid out in place are programs that we all feel comfortable with. And the difficulty of implementation, which has been the subject of repeated exchanges this afternoon, is one that we just have to keep working on.

And then there's the issue of corruption. And we all agree—and President Karzai has said this publicly—that corruption is a serious issue. And he's working on it, and he's upgrading the High Office of Oversight, which is in charge of that issue.

It would be unfair, however, to hold any one person accountable for the totality of events inside any country, even if that person is the chief of state. And in this particular case, even more so, with a good chunk of the country insecure, ethnic divisions, and, historically, a complicated relationship between Kabul and the outlying regions, which have different ethnicities to them.

So, I am not—I think he's doing the best job he can under the circumstances. I know that doesn't satisfy some of your colleagues, but I do absolutely know he's doing that. And if the reintegration program gets off the ground, and if it's successful, it will have a huge effect.

Senator CASEY. Thank you very much.

Senator LUGAR. Thank you, Senator Casey.

Senator Wicker.

Senator WICKER. Mr. Chairman, one bit of housekeeping. In response to Senator Corker, Mr. Holbrooke referenced a report. I'd like to ask unanimous consent that that report be inserted in the record of this hearing at that point in the testimony.

Senator LUGAR. Without objection, the report will be placed in the record.

Senator WICKER. I think that the context is important there, and I don't want people who read this transcript to have to refer back to a previous hearing. So, thank you for that.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The report mentioned above "Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy," was first submitted for the record at the January 21, 2010, hearing on Afghanistan. It was too voluminous to include in the printed hearing but will be maintained in the permanent record of both hearings.]

Senator WICKER. You know, I think, Ambassador Holbrooke, you have answered a lot of questions today. And clearly you are an experienced and longsuffering diplomat, and you have demonstrated that today, too.

Why are we in Afghanistan today, in 2010? Well, we are in Afghanistan because of 9/11. And we're in Afghanistan in 2010 because we still are not sure that the situation that arose from Afghanistan in 2001 might not happen again there.

I think you've made a compelling case that there are direct threats to the United States of America that could arise from that area. I think you've made an excellent case about the unique strategic position of Afghanistan and its neighbor, Pakistan. Clearly, we're interested in Yemen, we're interested in Somalia, but there are things about the location in Afghanistan that give al-Qaeda an advantage for being in Afghanistan that it would not have to have if they had to rely on a safe haven in Yemen or Somalia.

You've made a very telling statement, Mr. Ambassador, about the consequences if we walk away from Afghanistan, as we did 20 years ago. And I believe that's almost a direct quote of your testimony today, that the results could be catastrophic, as they were earlier because we walked away.

And in that context, I want to ask you to respond, Mr. Ambassador, to the comments of CIA Director Leon Panetta recently, when he said that United States officials had not seen any firm intelligence that insurgent troops in Afghanistan are interested in reconciliation, which I think we've acknowledged in this room today, is important if we're going to bring this effort to a successful conclusion.

Mr. Panetta said this—and you've read the testimony, but let me quote, for the record—"We have seen no evidence that they are truly interested in reconciliation, where they would surrender their arms, where they would denounce al-Qaeda, where they would really try to become part of that society. My view is that, unless they're convinced the United States is going to win and that they are going to be defeated, I think it is very difficult to proceed with a reconciliation that is going to be meaningful." That's as far as I will quote this President's CIA Director, and ask you to respond there.

You may feel that the President's position on the July 2011 beginning of withdrawal is clear, as you've said. But I would submit

to you, Mr. Ambassador, that it is not clear to everyone who listens, and it's not clear to the Taliban, and it's not clear to the people who feel threatened by the Taliban.

I agree with you, the vast majority, overwhelming majority, of Afghan people do not want the Taliban back, but they are legitimately worried about who would fill a vacuum if indeed they are interpreting the President's position in a way that is different from the way you are.

We have walked away before, according to your own testimony. And so, how can our enemy in Afghanistan who might be willing to acquiesce and say, "Yes, we want to be part of a peaceful society and a peaceful government"—how can they feel that they're going to be defeated if we are sending a signal that, depending on conditions on the ground in 2011, we might yet make a decision to walk away?

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Senator, in regard to Director Panetta's comments that you quoted, I agree with his comments. They are not inconsistent with what I said, because he was referring to reconciliation, the idea of higher level negotiations—or, effectively, negotiations—with the leadership of the Taliban Supreme Shura, also known as the Quetta Shura. And the press, at the time of his hearing, was filled with reports—erroneous reports—of deals in the offing. It just wasn't true. And Director Panetta was trying to clarify the record. And what he said was precisely right.

I have been talking about reintegration, the program announced, supported by the United States and the international community, which is so critical to take fighters off the battlefield. There's some overlap between the two. But, I think we all see the clear distinction.

In regard to your other question, you stated correctly the misunderstandings. All I can say is that the misunderstandings are, in an ironic sense, enhanced by constant questioning of the date. The President has been clear on what he said. I've tried to be clear this afternoon, in testifying before you. But, some people continually—in the guise of helping the United States, some people assert that the President is leaving, when he made clear he is not. He is starting a withdrawal, and that it will be—the size and scope and pace will be determined based on the situation and our national security interests. But, some troops will begin to leave. That's a big distance from the misperception that both you and I have seen.

And I understand your point, because it concerns me greatly. And I never make a speech where this doesn't come up, and especially overseas. So, I appreciate your comments, and I take them to heart.

Senator LUGAR. Thank you very much, Senator Wicker.

Senator Webb.

Senator WEBB. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador, it is good to see you again. I have great admiration for your spirit of public service and the energy that you bring into anything that you do here.

I would also like to say that I identify with Senator Lugar's opening statement and, to a certain extent, with the concerns that Senator Corker was laying out that there are a lot of people in this

country who are very confused. And I think, when you're working on this as intently as you are, the perception may be different. But, there is a real need for clarity in terms of what actually can be accomplished through the way that we are going about this.

We know that we have an obligation to be doing something here because of 9/11, but we also know that international terrorism is, by its very nature, fluid and mobile. There were no real operational al-Qaeda in Iraq when we got to Iraq. They came and they left largely before we decided to withdraw. We know that al-Qaeda is active in other countries. We have seen estimates, from Mr. Panetta, General Jones, and other people, that the level of al-Qaeda inside Afghanistan is less than 100 people. I know where your jurisdiction is, and I know the work that you're doing cross-border. But, for a lot of Americans, this is a very confusing thing.

Also, you and I know, from history, how effective targeted assassinations are.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Yes.

Senator WEBB. You will recall, when you were talking about the very beginning of when you were in Vietnam, when President Kennedy first announced the escalation in Vietnam and the Vietcong were assassinating an average of 11 government officials a day.

So, a lot of this talk about people being nervous about our timeline in Afghanistan, I would venture that a good bit of them are more nervous about the wedge that is being driven between them and this government because of the policy of targeted assassination.

So, all this sort of comes together in a way that, just speaking honestly because I greatly respect what you're trying to do and I've withheld any judgment about our policy until this December review—I said that when General Petraeus was at his confirmation hearing—but this is becoming more and more opaque to the public understanding as it has evolved.

What I'm looking for is what we're going to need to see, what the American people need to see by December are measurable results in a policy not simply program by program but evidence of political stability, rather than operation by operation and an agreed-upon conclusion. I take your point, which isn't whether we will walk away from an obligation, but there has to come a time when it will be appropriate for us to withdraw. We're not going to be there forever.

That's what the American people need to see here. And that's what I'm going to be looking for. And I wish you well.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Senator, there's almost nothing you said I can quarrel with. And you used the two words that you used which echo, and I hope that we all remember, are "measurable results." We—Senator Kerry began by saying "accountability," and you talk about "measurable results." So, we're judging ourselves by that. The President is demanding that of the military and civilian team that you have had testify before you.

That's why I'm making this trip. I was just in the region 2 weeks ago. I'm going back. I'm not doing it for the Frequent Flyer miles. And I cannot tell you how deeply we feel that pressure, particularly because, as several of your colleagues have said, American men

and women are risking their lives, sometimes paying the ultimate price, for this policy. And it has to work. We owe it to them.

At the same time, we recognize, as Senator Wicker said, that this began with 9/11. We're not there in the way we were in that other war that you and I remember. And so, we have to make this work. No one knows it better than the outstanding general who is commanding ISAF. I've known a lot of four-star generals in my career, and I've never seen anyone better than David Petraeus. And he is coming in under extraordinary circumstances. And he has immediately intensified the efforts.

Just to give you one example, which shows civilian/military and addresses you point, the very first issue he raised with us, in his first telephone conversation with Ambassador Eikenberry and me, and General Lute from the NSC, of civilian/military, was electricity in Kandahar. You all understand the relevance of that to the war effort.

We're going to give it our best.

Senator WEBB. Well, again I don't want to belabor this. I just want to be very clear here, I would agree that our difficulty, with respect to responding to international terrorism, was illuminated by 9/11. The question I'm going to be looking at over the coming months is whether we can address the issue of international terrorism through the structure that we're putting on the ground in Afghanistan. And that will be the—

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Well—

Senator WEBB [continuing]. Benchmark here.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Senator Webb, I just want to finish my response, then, by focusing again on what I really actually wanted to talk about more here today, which is Pakistan. And you understand why I answer your comment with that comment.

The western part of Pakistan, the lawless areas, are the epicenter of the issues that threaten our country. They're directly linked to the Taliban, but they're in Pakistan.

We have made real progress in Pakistan in the last year and a half. But, the focus is so overwhelmingly on Afghanistan—for valid reasons; that's where our troops are—that we have lost—we haven't even recognized the movement in Pakistan, across the board—economically, politically, strategically—and the fact that that is an important step forward. You want measurable results? There's one.

Senator WEBB. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator LUGAR. Well, thank you very much, Senator Webb.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Thank you, Ambassador Holbrooke, for being here. And, to you and all of the folks who are sitting behind you, thank you all very much for the work that you're doing.

I would like to go back to the issue of reconciliation and focus on that a little bit. You mentioned, Ambassador Holbrooke, the polling that has been done shows consistently that women, in particular, have concerns about the Taliban and would not like to see them return.

One of the concerns that I have heard consistently about any reintegration or reconciliation efforts with the Taliban are that that

would be at the expense of women and progress on women's rights and women's issues on the ground. So, I wonder if you could talk a little bit about what's being done to ensure that any efforts at reintegration and reconciliation will not undermine progress for women in Afghanistan.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. I can assure you, as I know the Secretary of State has assured you, that this will not be allowed to happen. I could give you many facts on this—in London, in the conference coming up next week; in the visit here by President Karzai and his Cabinet—we have—in the percentage of women in the Jirga—we have—in the National Assembly—we and the previous administration have consistently made this a priority issue. On every trip I make, I meet with women legislators or women civic society groups. They are the bravest people in the world, as you know firsthand from when you and I were over there together. And I can assure you that the United States will make sure that they are involved in every area.

We also have these direct programs. They used to be handled under contracts. I felt the contracts distanced us too far from the actual issues, so we eliminated most of the contracts. There were some complaints, and some of the complaints reached your committees. So, I want to explain very clearly to you, Senator, that we terminated as many contracts as we could in order to give more flexibility and more responsiveness in the women's programs through the Ambassador—the Ambassadorial Fund for Women—instead of these long 2-, 3-year lead times for programs which don't meet the current crisis. This is also true in Pakistan. I know you've talked to the Secretary of State about this, as have many of your colleagues. I can assure you, we will never let this issue out of our sight.

Now, in regard to reconciliation, if you read Secretary Clinton's speeches on this, and her comments, mine, and, of course, the President's, we have always made this is critical variable. If somebody wants to be reintegrated or reconciled, they have to accept the constitution and they have to renounce violence, and we need specifically, in any reconciliation talks, due respect for all minorities and the role of women. It would not be possible to go back to the black years.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, could you, then, talk a little bit more about how this process might work. Are we on the same page with President Karzai on how reintegration and reconciliation will happen? What elements of the Taliban are we focused on? And what's the role of Pakistan as we're looking at how any negotiation efforts would go forward?

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. You're talking about the role of women or the whole reconciliation?

Senator SHAHEEN. I'm talking about the whole process, but I assume that the role of women is part of that.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. We're on the same page with President Karzai on the role of women. But, I would be misleading you if I said that everyone in Afghanistan society and public life agrees with that. There are many conservatives who are anti-Taliban, but have the same views of the role of women that you and I would

object to. And in Pakistan, it's even more evident. And so, we can never cut down our vigilance on this.

The last three times I was in Afghanistan, I called on the Ulema Council, the senior religious governing body, specifically to discuss about these issues, because here are anti-Taliban people, but they're very conservative. That's a legitimate part of Afghan society. And many Afghan women themselves have told me that it's legitimate, in their views. But, at the same time, we cannot leave it where it is. And we are constantly talking about it.

Now, on the larger issue about reconciliation, we and President Karzai have begun an intense dialogue on this issue, which Secretary Clinton and I will continue on this trip. And we've had similar talks in Islamabad. But, I would tell you, in all frankness, that we're in the early stages of those talks. We couldn't begin them until after the inauguration, after the London conference, and after a certain sorting out. And, very importantly, Senator, we want reintegration programs to be out there and established before we start getting out in front. That's why Director Panetta made the comments that Senator Wicker referred to.

And the last point here is critical. The success or failure of reconciliation efforts will be linked directly to the success of the military operations. The more pressure, the more success that General Petraeus and his troops have, the more likely it is that the other side will recognize the impossibility of their situation.

Many people come to us and say, "You ought to have a cease-fire. Stop it. It'll work." I have, based on my own experience, the opposite view. Military success on the battlefield dictates the conditions of this sort of process.

Senator SHAHEEN. So, can you just briefly address Pakistan's role?

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Pakistan's role in reconciliation is ambiguous and opaque at this point. It is something that we want to learn more about Pakistani attitudes toward—remember, we're talking about reconciliation in Afghanistan—

Senator SHAHEEN. Right.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE [continuing]. Not Pakistan's own relationships. But, they have five major insurgencies going on in their country: the Afghan Taliban; the Pakistani Taliban, who are the trainers of the Times Square bomber; LET, which was responsible for the Mumbai bombing; the odious Haqqani network group—Haqqani group are the ones in north Waziristan who have been attacking the American Troops; al-Qaeda itself; and several other groups. So, their situation is enormously complicated and unique to Pakistan.

And this is the first time, Senator, we've really had these discussions in Islamabad. And we're very grateful to the leadership that has been shown by the Pakistani Government and its military leaders for the kind of dialogue that is underway as part of the strategic dialogue that Secretary Clinton and Foreign Minister Qureshi have headed.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much.

Senator LUGAR. Let me intrude for just a moment. The Ambassador will need to leave for the airport in 15 minutes. This does allow for two 7-minute question periods, which would be allotted to

Senators. But, I would ask Senators to be respectful of that. The Ambassador, as we know, is flying directly to the scene.

Senator MENENDEZ.

Senator MENENDEZ. I'll let Senator Kaufman—

Senator LUGAR. Senator Kaufman.

Senator KAUFMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Ambassador, I want to thank you for your service. And I especially want to thank your team. This is tough duty, under the best of circumstances, and the sacrifices that your team makes over.

And the second thing I'd say is, I think it's really key—you know, we kind of gloss over it—it's the civilian side of this that's going to make the difference in this. I think our military is performing incredibly. They know what they're doing. They're doing it well. But, it's going to be the civilian part of this that's going to make this a success, or not, in my opinion.

In that—with that in mind, you know, we talk about benchmarks. One of the benchmarks I've had for the last year and a half is not just generally corruption, but what happens when we get the many people we've brought in, our civilian people, and they start working with the ministries, and they start uncovering corruption, and they find specific cases that—they have wiretap information, they have all kinds of investigative information. So, I'd like your comment about—there was a June 28th article, in the Washington Post, that the Kabul government's been derailing these as the cases are being brought. To me, this is extremely, extremely serious. It goes right to what he said in his statement. It goes to our success. Not that there's corruption in general, but that, when you find corruption and you bring the case, that the case—the people are either—the cases are being pushed aside or the people are being pardoned.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Could you just clarify the specific question, sir?

Senator KAUFMAN. Oh, June 28, there was an article in—

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Yes—

Senator KAUFMAN [continuing]. The Washington Post—

Ambassador HOLBROOKE [continuing]. I remember it.

Senator KAUFMAN [continuing]. That says that the—

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. This is the corruption article.

Senator KAUFMAN. Well, not just corruption. The article says that when—they're finding cases. They are checking—investigating them. They're bringing in the cases. And the cases are being dismissed—

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. I see.

Senator KAUFMAN [continuing]. By the Kabul government. I mean—

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Well, I read the article carefully, and the companion one in the Wall Street Journal. We're very concerned about it. And I just can't comment on the specifics of the cases, because I just don't know enough about them. And I don't think I should comment on internal Afghan ongoing investigations.

The man they've talked to—mentioned—Mr. Zima, was part of the bribery case against Muhammad Noor. He was the former treasurer of Hajj operations. Mr. Noor's boss, the minister, escaped

the country before he could be arrested under the indictment. Noor himself has been convicted by the anticorruption tribunal, sentenced to 15 years in prison and a \$900,000 fine. And I understand that the Afghans are commencing an extradition effort against Minister Chakari.

We have a huge anticorruption effort underway, but it built on nothing. There was nothing when we came.

Senator KAUFMAN. No, I—look, I totally—

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. And so, to set it up has taken some time. Also, as I said earlier, Senator Kaufman, the elections really slowed it down. I'm not trying to defend our inability to have done more on this issue. It is of the highest importance. General Petraeus and I and Ambassador Eikenberry all share that concern. And we take that article very, very seriously.

Senator KAUFMAN. Because I—you know, there's a general charge of corruption, and clearly that's been one of the issues that people have talked about, and I think that's serious. But, I think what my—

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. You're talking about Task Force 2010.

Senator KAUFMAN. 2010?

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. On the—you mean, on the American side.

Senator KAUFMAN. Yes.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Yes.

Senator KAUFMAN. So—but, I'm just saying the—to me, where the rubber hits the road, the benchmark, the civ-mil metrics, all that kind of stuff—one of them is, when we get our folks over there, and we bring in good folks from DEA, FBI, and the rest of it—

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Right.

Senator KAUFMAN [continuing]. And we start to bring cases, you know, will the cases actually—will the government have the will to actually bring the cases, is one of the key—not just general corruption—you know, allegations, discussions, rumors—but, actually bringing cases. And I think this is especially true when you go into Kandahar, because I think when we go into Kandahar, we're going to find many, many cases of corruption. This is the Pashtun. This is the—the government. So, I'm just concerned that—I'm going to be watching very carefully.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. You know, Senator, the Anticorruption Tribunal of Afghanistan just convicted a border police general, named Saifullah Hakim, and two of his aids, on corruption charges. He had 800 ghost soldiers on his payroll. This tribunal's only been in existence for 5 months. It's a direct result of the efforts of the team that's seated behind me. It's part of the major—on the U.S. side—

Senator KAUFMAN. Yes.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE [continuing]. We have the Major Crimes Task Force. I don't want to leave you with the impression that we're solving the problem. But, at least we've identified it.

Senator KAUFMAN. Right.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. We're working on it. It's one of our highest priorities.

Senator KAUFMAN. Right.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. And this tribunal in Kandahar has a conviction rate of about 90 percent.

Senator KAUFMAN. Good. And I'm just—and, as you know, in a war on counterinsurgency it's a battle between whether the people respect the government, or not. It's kind of basic to counterinsurgency. There's a lot of talk, in the committee, about all these different things that not true. We know what counterinsurgency is. And one of the things, Do they respect the government, and will the rule the government? And clearly this is whether the government do that.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. One last point, Senator. Admiral Mullen, responding to these concerns and recognizing a previously unrecognized fact, which was, one of the major sources of corruption was in U.S. military contracts, established the task force I mentioned a minute ago—Task Force 2010. And I think that the admiral in charge of it is—I think you met with her—I think that's the admiral you're referring to.

Senator KAUFMAN. Right.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. And I apologize for not remembering her last—

VOICE. Dussault.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Admiral Dussault. Yes, she has been into our offices, and we're working very closely with her. And they—and their Task Force 2010 is really important, and its task is to review all contracts in order to limit contract-related fraud. Imagine that a year and—a year ago, this—the issue wasn't even acknowledged. Not an excuse, and it's not a solution, but at least we're being open and addressing it directly now.

Senator KAUFMAN. Thank you.

And thank you, Senator Menendez, for yielding. I appreciate that.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator LUGAR. Thank you, Senator Kaufman.

Senator Menendez.

Senator MENENDEZ. Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Thank you, Ambassador, for your service. I appreciate you have to leave. I hope you appreciate I have to cast votes on lives and billions of dollars.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Yes, sir.

Senator MENENDEZ. So, I'll try to make it as quick as possible.

I remain deeply concerned. I agree that you cannot talk about Afghanistan without talking about Pakistan. Obviously the more troops we deploy to Afghanistan, the more dependent we become on Pakistan for transit, logistical, and other support. So, as we developed the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act of 2009, I sought to include provisions that would ensure the United States has, one, a comprehensive strategy to eliminate terrorist threats and close safe havens to Pakistan; and, two, to assess the effectiveness of assistance provided, including—as it relates to efforts undertaken by the Government of Pakistan—to disrupt, dismantle, defeat extremist and terrorist groups in the FATA and settled areas.

Now, as of this moment, the administration has yet to provide these congressionally mandated reports, as the law calls for. I high-

lighted that fact in a letter to Secretary Clinton last week, and urged the completion of those reports.

Have you been involved in the preparation of those reports? And are you ready to make such congressionally mandated reports to Congress?

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Senator, of course I'm ready to comply with any congressional mandates, as I have throughout my career.

Senator MENENDEZ. And have you participated in the creation of these reports?

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. With your permission, Senator, may I just consult Assistant Secretary Verma for a second?

Senator MENENDEZ. Surely.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Because I just need to clarify what we're talking about here.

Senator MENENDEZ. Surely.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. I was not aware of a noncompliance on a mandated report.

[Pause.]

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Senator, my colleagues believe we are in compliance with the dates and the deadlines of the requirements from this committee and the Congress, and that there was a request for an update. I am not familiar with your letter to Secretary Clinton. Perhaps Secretary Verma can address that.

But, I do want to assure you, because it is—not just because we have an obligation to you, but because it is everything I've believed in, in my career, that we owe you whatever information——

Senator MENENDEZ. Well, I——

Ambassador HOLBROOKE [continuing]. You ask for.

Senator MENENDEZ [continuing]. I would just simply——

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. And I don't know what we would——

Senator MENENDEZ [continuing]. I would just simply ask you, and through you to the State Department, reiterate my request to Secretary Clinton. If you're all in conformance, then somehow this member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has yet to see that report. So, I would like to see it, and I'd like to get a copy tomorrow, if I can. If it's already out there, then we should be able to have it.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Of course you——

Senator MENENDEZ. I certainly will not vote for any more money unless I have a clear sense that we are headed in the right direction or that we are meeting goals and our resources are being well spent. And I can't do that unless I start off with the basis of understanding that we have benchmarks, and those benchmarks are being met. So, I hope we can get the report. Somehow maybe it missed my office.

I have one other question, and then I'll let you go.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. I absolutely—I will commit that we will—as soon as this meeting's over—will drill down, determine what the issue is, and locate where it is, and we will be back to you.

Senator MENENDEZ. Now, one more question. General McChrystal had a series of comments that he made about our civilian side overall. Of course, he was relieved of his command. I just want to know this: Are we all on the same page? You, the Amba-

sador, now General Petraeus—are we all on the same page? Because even being on the same page, it is a hard battle and challenge to win. But, if we're not all on the same page, it certainly doesn't create confidence in those of us who are asked to cast votes here for a continuing engagement. So, maybe you can reassure me that we are all on the same page, moving in the same direction, executing the same strategy, and moving toward a goal that we can collectively have success with.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. It's a very legitimate question, of course, in light of the Rolling Stone article, which obviously was extraordinarily unfortunate and necessitated a completely correct decision by our Commander in Chief, because basic issues of civilian/military control were involved. And although it brought to an end the career of a very distinguished and fine officer, it was necessary to do.

As far as your core question goes, let me assure you and state again, for the record, that my counterpart, until 2 weeks ago, was David Petraeus. For a year and a half, we worked seamlessly, continually. He is now the counterpart, of course, of the Ambassador. There was never a problem between us. We had tactical disagreements. But, we traveled around the world together. We testified before your committee together. And we forged a common civilian/military strategy. I've been involved in civilian/military efforts all my career. This is the best one I've ever seen. And, as I've said before, General Petraeus is the outstanding senior officer I've ever worked with. And we are absolutely on the same page when it comes to the overall strategy and working together. There are disagreements once in a while, and the press exaggerates them.

The article was a group of ad hominem remarks, some of them aimed at me, which made no difference to me, in my conduct of the war, nor, in fact, for my regard for General McChrystal. President Obama, addressing exactly the point that you raised in his meeting with us the day that he changed the command, and then in his public statements, made absolutely clear that we were all on the same page.

I've done CIVMIL before, and we're in good shape here. And I am fully satisfied about it. And I will be seeing General Petraeus in just a couple of days, and we will continue this.

Senator MENENDEZ. Have a good journey. I look forward to the report.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Thank you, sir.

Senator LUGAR. Thank you, Senator Menendez.

And special thanks to you, Ambassador Holbrooke, once again, for remarkable testimony and responsiveness to the questions of our members, and likewise pledges to bring additional materials, as requested, in a timely way.

And we wish you godspeed in your travels. We're hopeful that the conferences you have will be very productive for our country, as well as those with whom you are working.

Ambassador HOLBROOKE. Thank you, Senator Lugar.

And thank you, again, for Kerry-Lugar-Berman. It really made a difference.

Senator LUGAR. Thank you, sir.

The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:26 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

RESPONSES OF AMBASSADOR RICHARD HOLBROOKE TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY
SENATOR RUSSELL D. FEINGOLD

Question. The U.S. Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy pledges support for the Afghan Government reintegration efforts for Taliban and other fighters. Human Rights Watch, in a new report, has noted concerns that reintegration incentives, for example, to mid or higher level commanders, who can bring in combatants under their command, may be given without proper vetting for human rights and other abuses. What kinds of mechanisms are in place or should be put in place to ensure appropriate protections?

Answer. The program document for the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP), which was endorsed by participants at the July 8 meeting of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board and unveiled at the Kabul Conference, makes it clear that the APRP “is not a framework for pardoning all crimes and providing blanket amnesty. Grievance resolution and afwa [forgiveness] will be sought in accordance with Afghanistan’s Constitution, laws and treaty obligations.” The program document notes that ex-combatants will be granted political amnesty, freedom of movement and freedom from arrest for past political actions only if they agree to live within the laws of Afghanistan and subject themselves to its treaty obligations. It also states that the Afghan Government will “set a legal framework for political amnesty and forgiveness . . . in consultation with the justice sector, respecting Afghanistan’s laws, Constitution, and treaty obligations, and the Afghan people’s desire for peace.” The APRP also provides for the formation of a legal team within the APRP’s Joint Secretariat which will “align the terms of political amnesty and grievance resolution/afwa with the Afghan Constitution and existing domestic counterterrorism and criminal legislation.” This team will also provide advice to the Afghan Government including the APRP’s High Peace Council and will “prepare the legal framework and guidelines for amnesty and grievance resolution within the boundaries set by Afghanistan’s Constitution and treaty obligations.”

Question. Under Secretary Flournoy, in her testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee last month, mentioned a “high peace council or commission, which will be the Afghan mechanism that will really begin to try to start thinking through reconciliation.” How does the Afghan Government plan to ensure broad and effective representation on such a high council, including by women and minority religious and ethnic groups? How will it assure the Afghan people of the representative and transparent nature of such a mechanism?

Answer. The Afghan Government is in the lead on reconciliation and reintegration initiatives in Afghanistan and they are making every effort to ensure that the High Peace Council will be inclusive. At the Kabul Conference they released their reintegration plan, the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP), which offers the following assurances about representation on the High Peace Council:

- “The High Peace Council will seek to represent the views of all Afghans and provide political and strategic leadership to the Program [APRP]. The Council will be comprised of state and nonstate actors, women and minorities, military, civilian and respected individuals, including representation from both Afghan Houses of Parliament. There will be space reserved for existing/potential reconciles within the HPC, contingent upon their acceptance of the laws of Afghanistan.”
- “Afghan men and women will be seated on the High Peace Council, and Afghan women, victims, and civil society groups will play a vital role in monitoring the peace and reintegration process; providing advice to the Government on how to promote peace that benefits all Afghan citizens and ensuring that all opinions can be expressed and all voices heard. The APRP will also promote the role of victims and civil society groups in promoting constructive debate, building conflict management and grievance resolution capacity, leading advocacy for rights of all and ensuring inclusive processes.”
- “Social outreach and communications for the APRP will be conducted at national and subnational levels using contemporary media, governors’ spokesmen, and traditional forms of communication through mosques and provincial jirgas. The National Ulema Council—which will be represented on the High Peace Council—will encourage cooperation. According to the APRP’s program docu-

ment, “The communications and outreach plan will promote peace, and will continuously and transparently convey information on progress to the public.”

RESPONSE OF AMBASSADOR RICHARD HOLBROOKE TO QUESTION SUBMITTED BY
SENATOR ROGER F. WICKER

Question. Afghanistan’s parliamentary elections are scheduled for September 18, 2010. What steps are being taken to ensure that the same difficulties that plagued the 2009 Presidential elections do not resurface in September?

Answer. The Independent Electoral Commission [IEC], which is under new and improved leadership this year, is working to address problems that surfaced in the 2009 Presidential elections. We assess that it is on track to improve security, transparency, and accountability for the upcoming parliamentary elections. The IEC is largely on schedule in registering voters, preparing polling center and ballot materials, and hiring staff. We are encouraged by the IEC’s plans to detect and mitigate fraud for the September 18 parliamentary elections, some of which are described below:

- The IEC has developed a number of new security features to prevent the reproduction and/or tampering of sensitive materials, which include a unique serial number on each ballot for tracking purposes as well as barcode readers that will scan the ballot packs and tamper evident bags.
- As a means of improvement from previous elections, the IEC also plans to finalize the list of polling centers at least 1 month prior to Election Day. The development of a two-tiered assessment this year is a more comprehensive approach for determining and establishing the list of viable polling centers.
- In order to ensure that there will be no movement of materials prior to counting, votes will be counted at the polling station, in full view of political agents and observers. The number of votes cast for each candidate will be entered both in numbers and words to mitigate the tampering of the result sheets—another notable improvement from last year’s elections.

We are also encouraged that the Electoral Complaints Commission appears to be well led. Two of the five electoral commissioners are international experts—one Iraqi and one South African. Both are highly regarded.

A persisting problem for the upcoming elections is the difficulty of recruiting female searchers for prospective polling centers, which, according to the Ministry of the Interior (MOI), is due to budget constraints. We will continue to push this issue with the MOI to ensure that enough female searchers are recruited and trained for the elections.

Security also continues to be a problem, more so in some provinces than others. Security will most likely be the ultimate determinant of voter turnout on Election Day, especially with regards to female voters, who require extra protection. MOI has also been tasked to provide police forces to guard female voters, but has yet to do so.