

As Prepared for Delivery
Statement by Coordinator for Afghanistan
David T. Johnson
to the
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to testify today before the Committee. As I will outline in my remarks, we have many reasons to be upbeat about developments in Afghanistan.

Some seventeen months ago, Afghanistan was a country still mired in more than two decades of conflict. The vast majority of its people were living under the brutally repressive Taliban regime and suffering human rights abuses on a dramatic scale. Afghan women were oppressed, girls were denied an education, religious minorities were persecuted, and the common citizen had absolutely no democratic rights whatsoever. The humanitarian problems besetting the country were immense, and there was no prospect for economic recovery. Afghanistan was a haven for drug producers and traffickers. Tragically for this nation and the scores of others that lost citizens on September 11, Afghanistan was also a haven for international terrorists.

Today, the Taliban regime is history. Surviving terrorist elements have been forced into hiding, their networks and plans disrupted. Afghans are relishing a newfound freedom. The Emergency Loya Jirga in June of last year succeeded in creating a representative government with broad support from the population. The first peaceful transition of power in Afghanistan in 23 years occurred with the handoff from the previous Afghanistan Interim Authority to the current Transitional Government headed by President Karzai. President Karzai and his government are actively pursuing implementation of the Bonn Agreement and creating the various commissions needed to draft a constitution and create a democracy in which human rights - including the rights of women and ethnic and religious minorities - are protected.

The quick and generous response of the international community to the plight of Afghans in the immediate post-conflict period helped avert a major humanitarian disaster caused in part by drought and the unexpectedly large number

of returning refugees. Now, though humanitarian assistance will remain a necessary part of international aid to Afghanistan for the foreseeable future, a greater emphasis is being placed on reconstruction activities. Major infrastructure projects are underway in addition to innumerable small-scale projects across the country. The United States - together with Saudi Arabia and Japan - is contributing to a major project to rebuild a segment of the "ring road" linking Kabul to Kandahar and Herat. Together with improvements in communications, an opening of transportation routes will help tie the country together both economically and politically. Reconstruction is a long-term commitment, one that the U.S. and international community have made. It will require significant resources over the coming years. We and the other donor nations need to begin planning for these resources now. The results of this effort are clear: Already, goods and services are available to a degree previously unimaginable to most Afghans, and the seeds of a developing market economy have been planted.

In other positive developments, an independent media is taking root, a small but useful disarmament program has begun in the northern part of the country, and schools have reopened across Afghanistan. Over a million girls have enrolled in school, and women are entering universities. President Karzai issued an important decree in December outlining the size and character of a civilian-controlled Afghan National Army, and the United States and France are engaged in training the core of that military force. Similarly, Germany has taken initial steps to train a national police force. Both of these training efforts emphasize human rights as an integral part of the conduct of the military and police. Almost across the board, things are moving in the right direction for Afghanistan. This is no small accomplishment, especially for a poor country emerging from decades of conflict, and the people of Afghanistan deserve great credit for coming together to make it happen.

Despite this upbeat assessment, we must be forthright in assessing the underlying fragility of many of these accomplishments. Former Taliban and Al-Qaeda remnants remain in Afghanistan and the region, and they will continue to try to disrupt the aims of the Afghan government and the international community using disinformation, intimidation and violence. Poppy

production increased this past year and we must continue to combat that scourge. The central government's institutions are growing in strength but the challenges of training, equipping, housing, and paying government employees - including law enforcement and military personnel - are daunting. While we must continue to rely to some degree on local leaders and their fighters to provide security and stability in many parts of the country, in the longer term Afghanistan's history strongly suggests that the existence of regional leaders with independent militias and outside financial sources will undermine the goal of creating a stable and effective central government. We are working with Karzai to draw the center and the regions together.

Ultimately, Afghanistan must be able to provide for its own internal and external security if it is to be fully established as a strong and stable nation state. The United States recognizes the critical value of building an Afghan National Army (ANA) and building it right, and we and the French have been careful and deliberate in the training of the first five battalions of the ANA. It will take time to build an effective military force, and there are challenges that must be confronted and overcome. Recruitment will remain problematic - even if ANA salaries are increased - because the pool of potential recruits we must deal with remains largely uneducated and rived by ethnic divisions and old loyalties. We must also somehow link recruitment efforts to the broader process of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) of Afghan fighters, recruiting into the ANA or providing other employment to those demobilized as appropriate. Despite these challenges, we must persevere. Afghanistan's long term stability demands a national military force that is multi-ethnic, disciplined, subordinate to civilian authority, adequately armed, equipped and maintained, and sustainable.

In Kabul, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) retains the critical task of keeping the capital and its environs secure. British and Turkish forces have led ISAF well in the past year, and the U.S. Government will support the German and Dutch co-lead of ISAF, which began formally on February 10 - just two days ago. We believe ISAF will need to maintain a presence in Kabul at least through the Afghan elections in June 2004, at which point we hope the ANA will have picked up increasing responsibility for security in the capital and elsewhere.

We will therefore need to work within the United Nations to see ISAF's mandate extended past December 2003 - the end of its current authorization. In response to calls from some quarters that ISAF be expanded to other parts of the country, it should be noted that the United States does not oppose the expansion of ISAF. It would be a significant challenge, however, to expand its operations to cover a country the size of Afghanistan, and no country has volunteered for this task.

In terms of security in the provinces, Operation Enduring Freedom goes on and U.S. and coalition forces remain at work hunting Taliban and Al-Qaeda remnants and dealing with other threats to peace and security. We are also establishing in close concert with the central government "Provincial Reconstruction Teams" throughout Afghanistan. The first PRT was deployed in Gardez in late December. A second team deployed to Bamiyan in January, and a third will set up in Kunduz this month. Proposed sites for future PRTs include Mazar-i Sharif, Herat, Parwan, Jalalabad and Kandahar. The composition of individual PRTs will vary by location depending on local reconstruction and security requirements, but generally the teams will consist of civil affairs specialists, engineers, medical personnel, linguists, and U.S. regular and Special Forces. Afghan National Army personnel and personnel from our coalition partners may also participate in some capacity. We hope that the presence of these teams will enhance security in the areas in which they operate, permitting Afghan government authorities, international organizations, representatives of donor nations, and NGOs to go about the crucial business of reconstruction in a more secure environment.

To create a viable central government and establish the basis for a stable democracy and developing market economy, it is critical that the Bonn Agreement continue to be implemented. The Judicial, Human Rights and Civil Service Commissions called for in the Bonn Accords have been established, and a Constitutional Drafting Committee is at work and expects to have a draft constitution by early March. The challenges ahead are considerable, however. The timetable for holding national elections in June 2004 is ambitious. The process of drafting the new constitution and obtaining public buy-in for it will also prove a complicated task. There are profound social, religious, and political currents that somehow must be satisfied in

the final document. The constitution must offer the fundamental framework for a society and a judicial system based on respect for human rights and the rule of law.

In that vein, the United States will continue to work with Afghanistan, Italy and others in the international community to help rebuild Afghanistan's judicial system. This is an enormously complicated task. Lawyers and judges must be trained, laws rewritten, courts and prisons rehabilitated - the list of things to do is long. In addition, in order for the rule of law to prevail, Afghanistan must have the security provided by an effective and professional police force. Germany is the lead nation in working with the Afghan government to create such a force, but the road ahead will not be easy or fast. The estimated 75,000 police in Afghanistan have no strong central authority, and the various police forces in the country's 32 provinces operate with considerable autonomy. Corruption is rife in many areas. Although the initial focus of training will be to get the police in Kabul up to speed, the need to train and equip police in other parts of the country is obvious. Active international engagement on this issue will remain vital for the foreseeable future.

Narcotics production and trafficking pose a critical threat to security in Afghanistan. We and our international partners see narcotics as a crosscutting issue for all reconstruction and developmental assistance. The 2002 estimate for opium poppy cultivation shows an increase of approximately 30,000 hectares in Afghanistan and we expect another large crop this year. Weak institutions, corrupt officials, impoverished farmers, and strong warlords and drug traffickers hobble implementation of the Afghan government's opium ban. Insecurity in many poppy-growing areas hinders NGOs from full implementation and monitoring of development programs. U.S. counter-narcotics support for the UK lead on this issue and the Afghan government focuses on alternative livelihood programs, building up Afghan law enforcement capacity, and running a vigorous public affairs campaign against drugs. With our G-8 partners, we are encouraging neighboring countries to strengthen interdiction capabilities and increase cross-border cooperation to stop the regional drug trade. These strategies will develop over the long term in tandem with progress in overall security and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan.

We appreciate the strong support of Congress for our commitment to Afghanistan. The Afghanistan Freedom Support Act has helped reinforce the message that the United States will not walk away from this war-torn country. We plan to put its provisions to good use, by providing assistance to the Afghan National Army through drawdown. I thank the Committee for its key role in the enactment of this legislation last year.

There is obviously still much to do in Afghanistan. We have made a necessary commitment to the future of that country, and our investment - in terms of lives and national treasure - has already been considerable. The Bush Administration has repeatedly stated its resolve to remain engaged in Afghanistan. Regardless of the other challenges that our nation may have to face, our commitment to Afghanistan will hold strong. To confront our challenges effectively, we must continue to work with Congress, and I am delighted to be here today as part of that process.

I would be pleased to answer your questions. Thank you.