

TESTIMONY  
OF  
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FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE  
UNITED STATES SENATE  
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Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to address you and the Committee today regarding progress in carrying out U.S. policy toward Afghanistan.

Let me begin by sharing a few strategic thoughts about our involvement in Afghanistan to help shape our discussion today: Why are we there and what strategy are we pursuing to achieve these goals?

After 9/11 the United States, joined by many international partners, toppled the Taliban regime to never let Afghanistan become a sanctuary for terrorists again. Our goal is to defeat the insurgency and return Afghanistan to long-term stability based on Afghan national sovereignty, democratic principles, and respect for human rights. We have achieved many successes in our fight against the Taliban and Al-Qaida, but we have not won yet. Our goal requires a large commitment from us and our Allies, and will continue to for a considerable time.

This commitment is an investment, because Afghanistan is more than just a theater to fight enemies. It is a place of strategic opportunity. Afghanistan offers a rare opportunity to win a close, loyal, democratic ally in the heart of a continent with unmatched political and economic capital and potential. Afghanistan is located at the crossroads of countries that are the focus of our foreign policy efforts and has the potential of becoming the linchpin for regional integration in South and Central Asia. The transformation from an essentially ungoverned territory into a land bridge between the hitherto virtually disconnected South and Central Asian regions provides new opportunities for growth in trade and security. We have the

opportunity to help the Afghans in what is also their fight for long-term stability respectful of democratic principles and respect for human rights.

Concurrent with security efforts to fight insurgent groups and train the Afghan National Security Forces are the equally crucial efforts to improve governance and prosperity. We're seeing support for the insurgency decline and support for the Afghan government increase in areas where Afghans are provided access to fair government institutions and economic livelihoods.

It is against this strategic background that I want to discuss the individual areas of our Afghanistan engagement. We have made progress on a broad range of fronts. Particular achievements include economic growth, strengthened local and national institutions, and successes on the battlefield. But our job is not finished, and important challenges remain, most prominently in the fields of terrorism, narcotics, human rights, and corruption.

## **SECURITY**

I am pleased to report that our counter-insurgency effort has shown the way to success. We have made considerable progress against the Taliban insurgents. U.S.-led NATO forces in the East, have successfully married security with governance and reconstruction in a full-spectrum counterinsurgency effort. We are seeing Afghan army and police, governors and citizens resist the Taliban. In the South, Afghan and Allied forces have taken the fight to the Taliban, recently recapturing the restive district of Musa Qala and helping establish Government of Afghanistan presence. We and our NATO and Afghan partners continue to work together to consolidate and extend those gains by bringing in governance and development.

Due to their inability to win on the battlefield, the Taliban have resorted to malicious tactics such as improvised explosive devices, suicide bombers, and directly targeting foreign civilians. The attack on the Serena Hotel in Kabul on January 14 is but the most recent example. We are also battling a Taliban communications strategy that reflects neither the truth nor any respect for the local population.

The United States and our allies in Afghanistan share the desire to see the Afghan Government assume greater responsibility for its own security. We have had success in building Afghanistan's security forces. At this point, we have

already trained and equipped more than 49,000 Afghan National Army personnel. The Afghan National Army is a respected institution in Afghanistan and the Afghans show an increasing capacity to plan and lead independent military operations.

The transition from a system of militias loyal to local commanders and warlords, to a professionally led force that respects and enforces rule of law and human rights will take time. We have a sound program in place for developing the Afghan police and to increase policing capacity at the district level. Through better training and leadership, improved pay and electronic distribution of salaries, and provision of better equipment, we are working to ensure that the police are ready and motivated to do their jobs.

We are increasing American support to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force with more troops and resources because we are committed to NATO's mission. The United States will deploy an additional 3,200 marines to Afghanistan this spring. 2,200 Marines will be deployed to Regional Command South under command of the International Security Assistance Force. The remaining 1,000 Marines will train Afghan National Security Forces.

Success is possible, but not assured. Therefore, the international community needs to continue and expand its efforts. The greatest threat to Afghanistan's future is abandonment by the international community. As Secretary Gates has made clear in testimony here and in other public comments, meeting the requirements identified by NATO commanders remains a challenge. The mission in Afghanistan needs more troops, equipment (such as helicopters), and trainers for the Afghan army and police. We expect more from our NATO Allies; we have promised the Afghan people to assist in stabilizing their country, and we must give NATO personnel the tools they need to make good on that promise. Too few of our Allies have combat troops fighting the insurgents, especially in the South. As we look to the upcoming NATO Summit in Bucharest in April, we will continue to work with our 25 NATO Allies and 13 additional partners in Afghanistan to meet the requirement to complete the NATO mission.

## **GOVERNANCE**

Lasting stability will only come when the Afghan government can step in to fill the void that is left when an area is cleared from insurgents. We must, therefore, focus on the less tangible but equally as critical goal of extending the

government's influence nationwide. In order to persuade them to side with their government against the insurgents, Afghans must be given more visible evidence that their own government has the ability to deliver basic services, provide rule of law, uphold human rights, and extend economic opportunities effectively, transparently, and responsibly in all corners of the country. Our foreign assistance programs foster programs big and small to help achieve the objective of visible and viable governance at the local level. We are funding local projects developed by community and provincial councils that play an increasing role in responding to the people's needs. We are also helping the Ministry of Education create a network of public service academies and the Ministry of Justice to promote rule of law at the local level.

We support honest and competent governors that respond to the needs of the people and respect human rights. In this context, we welcome the establishment of the Independent Directorate for Local Governance which has already achieved encouraging results. We hope that this institution will continue to be instrumental in fostering people's confidence in the state.

## **RECONSTRUCTION**

Reconstruction and development work remains on track in most of the country and the Afghan economy continues to grow at impressive rates, with licit Gross Domestic Product more than doubling since 2002. Thanks in large part to our colleagues in the U.S. Government, the lives of millions of Afghans have improved considerably: In 2001, just 8 percent of Afghans had access to some form of healthcare; now, more than 80 percent of the population has access to medical care. Almost 11,000 medical professionals have been trained. More than 680 hospitals and clinics have been built and outfitted. For the first time in 10 years, the grain harvest was sufficient to meet consumption needs inside Afghanistan. In 2001, 900,000 children – mostly boys – were enrolled in school; now, there are more than 5 million and more than 1.5 million of these (34%) are girls and young women. Since 2001, there has been a 22 percent decline in mortality rates for infants and children under 5 years of age – we are saving 85,000 more young lives every year. Two years ago only 35 percent of children were being inoculated against the polio virus. Now more than 70 percent of the population – including 7 million children – are inoculated. In 2001, there was a dysfunctional banking system. Now, Afghanistan has a functioning Central Bank with more than 30 regional branches and an internationally-traded currency. There are now 3 mobile telephone companies serving over 3.5 million subscribers – this

is almost 11 percent of the population. In 2001, there were 50 kilometers of paved roadway in the country, now there are more than 4000 kilometers of paved roads.

We plan to allocate close to \$600 million dollars of our Fiscal Year 2008 base foreign assistance budget to reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan, which will support programs ranging from education, health, agriculture, infrastructure, and Provincial Reconstruction Teams. In the Fiscal Year 2008 supplemental, we have also requested about \$500 million to build roads and power infrastructure and another \$50 million to expand our successful health and education programs. Working hand in hand with the Government of Afghanistan, these initiatives are critical tools to connecting the Afghan people to their government and transforming the environment to one in which they have the basic services necessary to prosper.

## **DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

Our support for democratic stability and human rights in Afghanistan is also paying off. The Afghan parliament is assuming its appropriate role as a deliberative body. We attach great importance to the upcoming Presidential and Parliamentary elections because having free, fair, and transparent elections is an essential part of Afghanistan's transition to a full democracy. Given that voter registration will take about a year to complete, it needs to begin soon. The Afghans will have to make key decisions on election dates and the electoral system. In the Fiscal Year 2008 Supplemental, the President requested \$255 million for critically needed democracy and election-support programs.

There is now a renewed focus on rule of law and the justice sector. We have established a public-private partnership with American law firms and schools to help advance rule of law and establish a strong core of legal professionals. We believe a transparent and fair justice system is critical to ensuring that the people of Afghanistan respect the authority of the central government and to ensuring that the rights of Afghan citizens are protected.

The development of an independent, active Afghan media has been remarkable. However, there is still room for improvement. We are concerned with the increase in detention of journalists and government interference in media coverage over the past year. Also troubling were the deaths of two female journalists last summer and the recent death sentence of a young Afghan journalist. We are working with the Afghan government and the Afghan parliament to

emphasize the importance of the new media law currently in the legislative process meeting international standards regarding, in particular, the legal protection of journalists and removing vague content restrictions, establishing a fair, independent licensing system and an independent body to govern Radio Television Afghanistan.

A peaceful and stable Afghanistan cannot be secured without the active political and economic involvement of women. While women's political participation has gained a degree of acceptance, women who are active in public life continue to face disproportionate threats and violence. Furthermore, women and girls continue to face severe discrimination and both formal and customary justice mechanisms that fail to protect their rights. The U.S. is firmly committed to support for Afghan women and integrates women's issues into virtually all of its programs, aiming to increase female political participation, education, economic opportunities, and their role in civil society.

## **COUNTERNARCOTICS**

Though the number of poppy-free provinces doubled in 2007, total opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan grew significantly. The Afghan government and the international community are alarmed about this development. Afghanistan's poppy production fuels corruption, narcotics addiction, and is a significant source of financing for criminal and insurgent groups. In order to prosper, Afghanistan must rid itself of the opium poppy. President Karzai and his top leaders recognize this.

Countering poppy growth requires a multi-faceted approach. We are pursuing precisely such an approach with our five pillar strategy involving public information, alternative development, law enforcement, interdiction, and eradication: We are reinforcing the message that poppy cultivation is immoral, illegal, and un-Islamic. We are helping farmers to gain access to other means to feed and clothe their families – access to alternative crops and other means of livelihood, to roads that will allow them to move their crops to market, to advice concerning markets for their new crops and to legitimate sources of credit. We are also helping the Afghan government to increasingly provide credible law enforcement, interdiction, and eradication. The disincentives for poppy cultivation must be bigger than the potential profit. The credibility of our counternarcotics efforts must include making the risks of growing poppy unacceptable.

Local governance structures and counternarcotics are closely interconnected. Where government has control and has placed good administrators, poppy production is down. Where the insurgency rages, poppy production is up.

## **RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN**

The Afghanistan and Pakistan bilateral relationship and improved coordination of border surveillance activities along the Durand Line is crucial for stemming the cross-border flow of insurgents and eliminating their safe havens in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Afghanistan's relations with Pakistan moved forward in 2007 with several summits, the productive August bilateral peace jirga in Kabul, and President Karzai's successful visit to Islamabad in late December. Both sides agreed at the August peace jirga to hold routine mini-jirgas. Pakistan has offered 1000 scholarships to Afghans in a good step to increasing positive connections. Current political events in Pakistan may divert the attention of the Pakistan Army from combating extremism in the FATA, however, close military cooperation with Pakistan is still key to the success of U.S. strategic goals in the region.

We continue to encourage the Government of Pakistan to take sustained and aggressive actions against violent extremists. At the same time we recognize that a purely military solution is unlikely to succeed. We therefore strongly support the Government of Pakistan's efforts to implement a comprehensive and long-term strategy to combating terrorism and eliminating violent extremism in the border regions, which include the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, parts of the Northwest Frontier Province, and Baluchistan. We are committed to supporting this initiative to bring economic and social development and effective governance, thereby rendering these remote areas inhospitable to violent extremists. We are also looking forward to working with Pakistan's new civilian government on this important initiative after the February 18 parliamentary elections.

Along the Afghan side of the border as well, we're seeing signs that local support for terrorism is declining as a direct result of our comprehensive efforts on security and reconstruction. Improvements in roads leading to Pakistan reap economic, social, and security benefits. But they also make it easier to identify insurgents crossing the border. While some of the fighters along the Pakistani side of the border intend to cross over into Afghanistan to attack U.S. and NATO military forces, their main goal now seems to be the expulsion of the Pakistani

military from the Tribal Areas and the imposition of sharia law in the areas they control.

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to appear before this Committee. We at the State Department appreciate the Committee members' interest and support of this most important endeavor. We and our Allies must recognize that success in Afghanistan is our only option. I am convinced that we are all moving in the right direction and that with sustained international support Afghanistan can look forward to a stable, democratic, and more prosperous future so that this country will never again fall prey to extremists and terrorists. I am pleased to respond to your questions.