

Statement of  
Admiral Michael G. Mullen, USN  
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff  
Before the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Chairman Kerry, Senator Lugar and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the subject of the President's newly announced strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The President's Tuesday evening announcement at West Point of our strategy and increased military resources for Afghanistan culminates a process of deliberate strategic review that began with the arrival of General McChrystal's interim assessment in early September. I believe this national-level review has been sober and essential. The challenges we face in Afghanistan and Pakistan are great, and our interests there are significant. This Administration needed to take the time to look at all the options and craft a balanced and sustainable approach. I believe that the review has met this aim.

I support fully, and without hesitation, the President's decision.

### **Refining the Strategy**

The facts compel us to act. Our strategic review confirmed that the overarching policy goal remains the same: to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and to prevent its capacity to threaten America and our allies from either country in the future.

South Asia is the epicenter of global Islamic extremism; the location of al Qaeda's core leadership and the terrain that dozens of Islamic terrorist groups call home. It is the location from which the 9/11 attacks on America were planned and driven. If the United States should be hit again, I remain convinced that the planning, training and funding for such an attack will emanate there. It

is a region where a nuclear weapons state, Pakistan, is under direct threat from al Qaeda and affiliated Pakistani-Taliban groups that aspire to acquire and use nuclear weapons against the United States and our allies. Thus, it is a region with a unique – and deadly - combination of the most dangerous terrorists and the most dangerous technology in the world. Our actions in Pakistan and Afghanistan seek to prevent catastrophic outcomes from these toxic forces, and constitute a most critical national interest.

Our strategic review paid particular attention to Pakistan. The people of Pakistan are under as much, if not greater, threat from al Qaeda and Islamic terrorism than are we. We must encourage and aid the Pakistani military fight against these extremists in South Waziristan, in SWAT, and across Pakistan. We must also help Pakistan widen its aperture in seeking out and eliminating all forms of extremism and terrorism – those who threaten not only Pakistan, but also Afghanistan, the wider South Asia region, and the globe. We are deepening ties with the people of Pakistan as well as with their security forces. We see progress with our Pakistani allies as paramount to the way ahead.

In Afghanistan, we narrowed-in on a challenging, but attainable goal: to deny al Qaeda safe haven and the Afghan-Taliban the ability to overthrow the duly elected Afghan government. To achieve this refined strategic aim, we must continue to deny al Qaeda any Afghanistan toe-hold, reverse the momentum of the Taliban insurgency, and build sufficient Afghan government and security capacity to eventually defeat the insurgent threat. Our review also narrowed and refined the military objectives for General McChrystal's NATO-ISAF force – focusing it on security of key population areas while Afghan forces grow in size and capability, prioritizing a robust NATO-ISAF program of training and mentoring Afghan military and police, and establishing the conditions necessary for Afghans to assume their own security. Each of these objectives will hasten the day when we can begin thinning the U.S./NATO-ISAF security forces presence,

turning the internal security of Afghanistan over to the Afghans. This strategy provides the time and space for the Afghans themselves to build sufficient security and governance capacity to stabilize their country.

Our refined military objectives for Afghanistan complement those in the political and economic spheres. They also support diplomatic, political, and military programs that the President's strategy calls for us to undertake with neighboring countries – especially Pakistan – that increase pressure against al Qaeda's leadership; that expand counterinsurgency operations against Taliban insurgents who threaten Afghanistan, Pakistan and the wider region; and that help set the conditions for improved regional security and stability.

### **Matching Strategy and Resources**

Throughout this strategic review, I advised the Secretary of Defense and the President that our commitment of military resources must match our strategy.

I am pleased to inform this Committee that the President's decision accommodates this advice. The strategy he approved commits 30,000 more U.S. forces, with some number of additional enablers, while calling for our NATO and non-NATO allies to generate additional forces. This rapid, Coalition-wide build-up of force aligns with General McChrystal's recommendations, even more so in light of the narrowing of objectives for Afghanistan that the President announced Tuesday night.

The President's commitment is to rapidly send these additional forces forward—to get as much force into the fight as fast as General McChrystal can absorb it. This allows Generals McChrystal and Petraeus to plan for cohesive logistics and transportation support over the course of the coming year. While there are no guarantees in war, I expect that we will make significant headway in the next 18-24 months. I also believe we could begin to thin our combat forces in about the same time frame. From a military standpoint, the President's

commitment to an increase in military force, especially backed by an increase in civilian resources, is much better than one featuring periodic assessments that trigger incremental force escalation.

The President's decision also supports accelerated expansion of Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) -- a critical initiative. We simply must invest in the growth of an Afghan security force—through more radical and in-depth partnering. The additional U.S. and Coalition forces heading to Afghanistan will focus a great amount of time and energy toward empowering a strong and capable ANSF.

General McChrystal intends to use these additional U.S. troops to conduct more focused counterinsurgency operations that enhance population security against the Taliban in south and east Afghanistan. As in Iraq, our troops will live among the population. Thus – and as General McChrystal has successfully emphasized since his arrival as COMISAF last June -- we will continue to make every effort to eliminate civilian casualties, not just because this is the right thing to do, but because these casualties work against our goal of Afghan population security. Although we must expect higher Alliance casualties in coming months as we dedicate more U.S. forces to protect the population and mentor the ANSF, our extended security presence must – and will – improve security for the Afghan people and limit both future civilian and military casualties

### **Moving Forward - Conclusion**

No commitment of additional force in the number we plan for Afghanistan is without risk. The Joint Chiefs of Staff and I assess the risks to our military forces and our military missions – at home and abroad – from this force deployment decision to be acceptable. We can continue to balance the additional force flow requirements for Afghanistan against those coming available from draw-down trajectory programmed for, and on track in, Iraq.

I believe that progress in Afghanistan and Pakistan will be gradual, and sometimes halting. Yet I believe we can succeed. The President's announced strategy and this force flow decision give us the best possible chance for success. We must exhibit vision, apply sufficient resources, and display endurance to realize our objectives for Afghanistan and Pakistan. Most challenges we now confront in the South Asia region are not military in nature. They require solutions from and led by national and local governments. Yet none of these solutions are possible in an environment of insecurity. Our role must be to fill the security gap for a short time, concurrently growing our partner government's capacity to self-secure. Pursued with resolve, our actions will send an unmistakable message that the U.S. remains committed to the common good, while steadily expanding the sets of partnerships available to address future challenges without a long-term need for large numbers of U.S. combat forces.

In providing advice to this President over the past 10 months, one important point I have made, consonant with other key presidential advisers, is that our military activities must support rather than lead our Nation's foreign policy. Our warfighting ability will never be in doubt. But we have learned from the past eight years of war that we serve this Nation best when we are part of a comprehensive, integrated approach that employs all elements of national power to achieve the policy goals set by our civilian leaders. This approach remains crucial in Afghanistan, Pakistan and across South Central Asia.

On behalf of our service members, I would like to thank the members of this Committee – and the Congress as a whole --- for the sustained investment in our brave young men and women in uniform, and for your unwavering support of them and their families as they continue to serve so magnificently and selflessly in this time of protracted war.