

**** EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY ****

STATEMENT OF

**DAVID S. SEDNEY
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN AND CENTRAL ASIA**

BEFORE THE

**UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS**

JUNE 20, 2012

Mr. Chairman, members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to update you on the Afghan National Security Forces and Transition.

The United States' fundamental objectives, strategy, and campaign plan in Afghanistan have not changed. Our goal remains to deny safe havens to al-Qaida and to deny the Taliban the ability to overthrow the Afghan government. Thanks to the more than ten years of dedication and sacrifice of our forces, our Coalition partners, and the Afghan people themselves, we have taken enormous strides towards achieving those objectives, particularly over the last three years.

To that end, U.S., Afghan, and Coalition forces continue to work to drive-down the Taliban-led insurgency in their strongholds and to build-up the capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces and the Afghan Government. Our efforts remain on track to enable the Afghans themselves to assume the lead for security nationwide by the end of 2014. As we continue to shift more areas to Afghan security lead, by the end of this September, the final 23,000 American "surge" troops will return home. The American and Coalition forces that remain on the ground will facilitate the continued transition of the security lead to the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP) in accordance with General Allen's campaign plan.

The key to this recent success and for a successful Transition is the increasing capability and confidence of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). The ANA and ANP are both on schedule to meet their goal by or before October. Additionally, the ANSF now participate in over 90 percent of all operations in Afghanistan and are in the lead for over 40 percent of these missions, and this rate is growing. As General Allen stated to Congress in March, the ANSF are "better than we thought they were to be. Importantly, they're better than they thought they could be."

This improved capacity has allowed the ANSF to assume more and more of the security lead in Afghanistan. With the first two tranches of Transition currently underway, 50 percent of the population lives in areas with ANSF in the security lead. This number will climb to 75 percent when the recently announced Tranche Three begins transition this summer. Tranche Three contains a number of contested areas and this will test the capabilities of the ANSF. This

fighting season will be the most significant challenge yet for the ANSF. However, the time to test them is now, when we have the forces in theater to ensure their success. Currently, the insurgency retains the ability to conduct complex attacks. The April 15 attacks in Kabul and the recent attack on FOB Salerno were sophisticated and coordinated. However, these attacks were largely tactical and operational failures, and the response to the attacks in Kabul in particular highlighted the increasing competence of the ANSF.

We have seen two major achievements that send a strong signal to the Afghan people, the Taliban and the region. First, the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) signed in May by Presidents Obama and Karzai shows that the United States and Afghanistan are committed to a mutually beneficial relationship beyond 2014. Second, the Chicago Summit was a great success and demonstrated the continued dedication of over 50 NATO and other partner nations to supporting security and stability in Afghanistan. ISAF's members reaffirmed their commitment to the Lisbon timeline to complete transition by the end of 2014 and continue engagement in Afghanistan post-2014. As NATO Secretary General Rasmussen put it, "NATO and our ISAF partners will not leave the task undone. We will not let Afghanistan slip back into the hands of militants, which the vast majority of Afghans utterly reject. We will finish the job to help create a secure Afghanistan – for our shared security."

Two additional U.S.-Afghan bilateral arrangements, the Detention and Special Operations Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), preceded the SPA and were completed earlier this spring. These two MOUs were critical to demonstrating U.S. commitment to Afghan sovereignty and the expanded capacity of the ANSF.

While we have made progress, challenges still exist. Limited governance capacity and corruption continue to plague Afghanistan and limit effective governance. Additionally, as stated by General Allen during his testimony to the Congress in March, the Taliban-led insurgency still operates from safe havens in Pakistan. Although we have had indisputable successes against al-Qaida, we continue to press the Pakistanis on the need to take greater action against the Taliban and affiliated groups. We will continue to work with our Allies and partners,

and the Pakistani and Afghan governments to address these issues and to keep the Congress informed of our progress.

As I close, I would like to thank the House Armed Service Committee and the Subcommittee for the opportunity to appear before you today and for your continued support for our men and women in uniform. I would also like to extend my gratitude for your support for the Afghan National Security Forces. Without your commitment to funding and resourcing the Afghan forces, we could not have achieved the progress of the last three years. I look forward to your questions.