

Congressional Testimony

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House Armed Services Committee

27 July 11

1000 a.m.

**2118 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC**

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Thank you Mr. Chairman, ranking minority and members of the committee, for allowing me, once again, to testify today on the War in Afghanistan.

I just completed, this month, an assessment for Gen. Petraeus, in Afghanistan and briefed Gen. John Allen, Gen. Petraeus' successor who is now the Commander, ISAF. This is the 3rd assessment in less than a year. Let me, briefly, provide some highlights from that assessment, which we can explore further in Q & A, if you desire.

- The President's recent drawdown decision of 33,000 troops no later than Sept. 12, 2012 has increased the risk significantly and threatens overall mission success. The ISAF command is conducting detail assessments of the drawdown impacts and what can be done to mitigate the risk.

- The Taliban have suffered a stunning defeat in the South, in Kandahar and Helmand province. So much, so, that it is not reversible unless we drawdown ISAF troops in those provinces, prematurely. I am making the

statement it is not reversible after considerable analysis and there are 3 major reasons:

- 1) We own the ground and are staying on it, with the ANSF, and not departing as we have done so many times in the past. The Taliban have tried to come back and have failed time and time again during the spring and summer offensive.
- 2) We have destroyed the Taliban's logistical infrastructure (IED factories and caches) which prevents the Taliban from sustaining their operations.
- 3) The people are aligned with ISAF and the ANSF and as such are providing assistance with tips, early warning and cache locations. In fact, a highly respected intelligence chief with considerable experience believes the Taliban and the people in Kandahar province after many years, "are getting a divorce".

- In the south, therefore, we have a much improved security situation which in time the ANSF will be able to take over and lead.

-- The security situation in the south improved dramatically because of the POTUS decision to escalate the war and provide much needed additional resources. Most of the so called surge forces were applied in the south, the birthplace and center of gravity of the Taliban.

-- Secondly, the ANSF have improved in quality and quantity and, now, number about 300,000, with a final force level of 352,000. This proves, once again, that quantity does have a quality all of its own.

- Moreover, the Afghan Local Police (ALP), essentially part time village police, selected by village elders, trained by the special forces, to protect villages in the contested areas, after the Taliban have been driven out - - is a potential game changer and one of the most successful programs we have enacted.

- And finally, there is a noticeable improvement in governance in the South with better leadership in district and sub district governors and the numerous elected councils at the village and district levels. Government capacity has improved but there is a long way to go before the national government is providing effective services at the local level.

- Our next major contested area is the East from Kabul to the Pakistan border. We have been conducting a defense in depth from the Pakistan border to Kabul which has been successful, in that, Kabul is, relatively stable and the legitimacy of the national government is not threatened by the insurgency. All that said, to defeat the Taliban and the Haggani Network in the east, it must become our main effort, and it will require an aggressive, comprehensive campaign. Those plans are in the making as we speak.

- Remember, the campaign in the South and the one in the East are not being conducted simultaneously, but sequentially, because the POTUS 2009 decision did not provide the 40,000 requested forces by Gen's McChrystal and Petraeus. The command received 30,000. Indeed, the campaign in the East is further threatened by the imminent withdrawal of 1/3 of U.S. forces by September 2012.

- We cannot discuss the security situation in Afghanistan without mention of the sanctuaries in Pakistan, which are the "engine of the insurgency". They are Charman and Quetta in the South and Mirham Sha in the East. Almost all of the middle and senior level leaders of the

insurgency come from these sanctuaries, many of the fighters and 80% of all the material for IED's originate in Pakistan factories.

- To succeed in Afghanistan, something must be done about the sanctuaries. A few points of emphasis:

-- Recognize our "soft" policy with Pakistan as it pertains to the sanctuaries has failed. There is NO doubt that Gen. Kyani and Gen. Pasha, the Chief of Staff and the Director of ISI are complicit in supporting the sanctuaries. We need a new approach diplomatically that recognizes their manipulation of the United States government and frankly, how destructive the military oligarchy is to the future growth and development of Pakistan. They are paranoid about their political struggle with India, but the Pakistanis have clearly, lost, India is a democracy which is one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Pakistan is moving in the opposite direction.

-- Moreover, covert and overt military options against the sanctuaries should be on the table.

- Let me conclude by saying significant progress has been made in Afghanistan, but success is far from guaranteed. The consequences of

failure and the direct impact to the security of the U.S. are unacceptable.

Many challenges remain:

-- We lack a coherent political and economic strategy for Afghanistan.

Ryan Crocker who will be taking his post shortly as the U.S. Ambassador will do much to turn around that reality. He is the best in the U.S. government and will truly make a difference.

-- We need a Redline for President Karzai not staying in power. It is unacceptable.

-- The strategic partnership agreement (SPA) impacts our success. It anchors our commitment and communicates the same to all of the players in and outside of Afghanistan. The sooner we achieve this agreement, the better.

--At a minimum, the 33,000 drawdown no later than September 2012 should be moved to no later than December 2012 to permit all those forces to be used during the entire fighting season of 2012.

- Protracted wars test the mettle of our great democracy. This war is worth fighting, and it is most certainly, worth winning. Our courage, moral and financial support and political determination to see it through is essential to success. Thank you and I look forward to your questions.