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STATEMENT BY

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BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AFGHAN NATIONAL SECURITY FORCES: RESOURCES, STRATEGY, AND
TIMETABLE FOR SECURITY LEAD TRANSITION

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Chairman Wittman, Ranking Member Cooper, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity today to discuss with you how the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) are doing.

Our bottom line up front is that we are on track to achieve our strategic objectives of denying al Qaeda safe havens in Afghanistan and denying the Taliban the ability to overthrow the Afghan Government. A sustainable and sufficient ANSF and Transition are two linchpins of our strategy. The ANSF continue to grow and improve and remain on track to assume the lead for security by the end of 2014.

Over the last few months we have seen several key indicators of progress that support our approach to security in Afghanistan. We signed agreements to transfer detention and night operations to Afghan lead. These were followed by signing a Strategic Partnership Agreement, announcement of the third tranche of areas to begin Transition and the NATO Summit in Chicago. These events are important steps in transitioning to Afghan security lead, supporting Afghan sovereignty, defeating the Taliban, and preventing Afghanistan from once again becoming a terrorist safe haven.

These accomplishments were possible because of increased ANSF capacity. Through steady growth in fielded forces and improved operational capabilities, the ANSF are assuming a greater role in providing security throughout Afghanistan.

ISAF remains focused on building a capable ANSF that can defend Afghanistan and become the defeat mechanism of the insurgency. ANSF continue to meet or exceed this year's recruiting objectives. For example, the Afghan National Army (ANA) is expected to meet their 2012 manning goal of 195,000 personnel by the end of this summer. The Afghan National Police (ANP) will reach their 2012 manning goal of 157,000 personnel before October 2012. As the ANSF meet their manning goal of 352,000, recruiters can become more selective to improve the quality of the force.

The ANSF continue to face challenges such as literacy, attrition, and filling noncommissioned officer (NCO) ranks. The NATO Training Mission in Afghanistan (NTM-A), Afghan Ministry of Defense (MOD), Afghan Ministry of Interior (MOI) provide literacy programs at training facilities and to the fielded force. Approximately 90,000 ANSF are in literacy classes on any day across Afghanistan. These programs are making the ANSF one of the most literate elements of Afghan society.

To be sure, challenges remain. Attrition continues to be an issue for the MOD and MOI. Although attrition will not keep the ANSF from meeting their manning goals, it continues to hamper long-term development. The security ministries continue to

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implement policies to combat attrition. The MOD directed significant changes to their policy to add timelines to drop AWOL personnel from unit rosters. This updated policy is expected to reduce the impact of AWOL personnel within the force.

NCO shortages continue to effect the development of the force. The ANA and ANP have developed plans to address NCO shortfalls. Both services are training, and promoting personnel from within their ranks to fill these critical leadership positions.

The ANSF are taking the lead in training their forces and implementing instructor cadre development programs. These Afghan instructors are capable of providing basic and advanced skills training at Afghan regional training centers and branch schools. ANSF instructors will continue to assume more of the lead for training throughout 2013.

Operationally the ANSF is making steady progress. ISAF Joint Command (IJC) currently rates 67% of all ANA units and 62% of all ANP units in the top two operational effectiveness categories of effective with advisors or independent with advisors. The number of ANSF and ISAF partnered operations increased from 116 in January 2012 to 126 in April 2012. The percentage of Afghan-led partnered operations increased from 33% in January 2012 to 59% in April. In some regions of the country Afghan forces conduct independent operations at a higher rate than their partnered operations. This increase in operational capacity continues at a steady pace.

The ANA's special operations capacity continues to grow and increase operational proficiency. The ANA is fielding special operations forces (SOF) across Afghanistan to support operations against insurgent and terrorist networks that threaten the transition process. These elements train and partner with ISAF SOF units. In the past three months, ANA SOF led or independently conducted operations increased from 44% in January 2012 to 54% in April 2012.

At the local and district level, Afghans are improving security with Village Stability Operations and Afghan Local Police initiatives. VSO and ALP programs are challenging the insurgency at the local level and facilitating village to national level governance.

All of these improvements in Afghan capacity are maintaining pressure on the insurgency as we recover our surge forces by the end of summer 2012. As we plan for a responsible draw down of our forces in Afghanistan the ANSF will face challenges on the battlefield but they will not face these challenges alone. To support the ANSF during transition ISAF is shifting to a Security Force Assistance (SFA) model that puts Afghans in a lead combat role with ISAF assuming a train, advise, and assist posture. During the transition period, ISAF will continue to fight alongside the ANSF when needed but will shift into a support role as Afghans step forward.

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The ANSF's operational challenges include logistics, Army-Police interoperability and confidence among others. Logistics systems in ANA and ANP are under development. NTM-A continues to generate logistics capacity to support the ANSF and ANP in the field. The ANSF logistics system is improving as ANA Corps and ANP regional systems come on line in support of the fielded force.

Interoperability between the ANA and ANP remains an issue to improving overall ANSF effectiveness. Some of this is "cultural friction" that will reduce over time as these forces operate and fight together. Operational Coordination Centers at the regional and provincial levels are one way to help improve interoperability between ANSF and better coordinate their efforts.

In my own opinion, the ANSF's greatest challenge is one of confidence. Our agreement to stand with them beyond 2014 has been a tremendous boost to their confidence. As the ANSF continue to move to the fore, their confidence will increase. The will of the force will further increase as leadership and capability improve across the formation. Once the ANSF realizes their potential they will become a force capable of securing Afghanistan.

In conclusion, we assess that security transition is on track to have the ANSF assume full responsibility for security across all of Afghanistan by the end of 2014. We remain committed to building a suitable and sustainable ANSF capable of defending Afghanistan from internal threats. As noted in the Chicago Summit declaration, "we have taken important steps on the road to a stable and secure Afghanistan and to the goal of preventing Afghanistan from ever again becoming a safe haven for terrorists that threaten Afghanistan, the region, and the world."

Thank you for the work you do on behalf of our servicemen and women, as well as your concerted efforts to ensure their protection and safety as they complete their mission in Afghanistan. I stand ready to answer your questions.

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