

STATEMENT OF
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DIRECTOR FOR OPERATIONS, J-3
THE JOINT STAFF
BEFORE THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
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Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Smith, distinguished Members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, along with Secretary Flournoy, to report on the progress of the Afghan National Security Force (ANSF).

Bottom Line Up Front

No member of this committee would disagree with the assertion that an operationally capable and professional Afghan National Security Force, to include both the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP), is critical to the long-term stability and security of Afghanistan. That is why ANSF development remains central to our overall strategy in Afghanistan. While tangible progress continues, real challenges remain, to include leader professional development, decreasing attrition, development of an Afghan culture of accountability, improving literacy, and others. Overall, enough positive gains were made to realize the transition of security responsibilities to Afghan lead in seven initial geographic areas. Future transition of security will require these gains to be maintained and expanded across all of the ANSF.

Training and Recruitment

The Afghan National Security Force has sustained an upward trend in quantity, quality, and operational effectiveness over many months. The positive and aggressive actions of both the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A) and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Joint Command (IJC) have contributed greatly – NTM-A on the front end with initial recruit training and capacity building, and IJC through partnering and mentoring efforts in the field. Where there is robust partnering, there is noticeable improvement in ANSF operational

capability. We have been particularly successful in conducting operations with Afghan Special Operations Forces, where both U.S. and Afghan Special Forces have shown equal desire to participate jointly in all operations. We continue to develop Afghan Special Operations capacity to realize 100% partnered operations – and we are close. Overall, ISAF remains committed to partnering as a complement to NTM-A’s superb efforts in building the force.

The ANSF routinely exceeds established goals for growth as a result of recruiting successes and increased retention, and is close to meeting the Fiscal Year 2011 manning requirement of 305,600 personnel. In July, the ANP exceeded both their monthly and their Fiscal Year 2011 recruiting goals. That said, July was the second time in 12 months that the ANA did not meet their recruiting goals, reaching 95% of their target. These shortfalls were due primarily to the application of more stringent selection criteria applied to ANA recruits. Approximately 1,600 recruits were turned away because of improved recruit vetting procedures. We see this as a net-positive since improved vetting of the recruit base helps improve the quality of fielded Afghan soldiers and police, and helps safeguard U.S. and coalition forces and their ANSF counterparts by reducing the insider threat.

The ANSF’s training capacity also continues to grow. The ANSF is in the process of assuming greater responsibility for the training of its own forces. The ANSF’s “Teach the Instructor” courses have resulted in an increase of more than 2,200 instructors in the ANA alone, while the ANP has increased by more than 900 instructors. This is significant, as Afghan instructors and Afghan-led training provides the ANSF with a long-term capacity to enhance and professionalize its forces.

Quality vs. Quantity – The Shift

Quantity alone, however, is insufficient for any appreciable level of near- or long-term success and stability in Afghanistan. Fielding of the Afghan National Army's programmed infantry Kandaks is near completion. Recruitment and retention efforts will need to continue so as to maintain the size of the force, but completion of the infantry Kandaks will allow ISAF and the ANSF to transition their focus from *force generation* to *force professionalization and effectiveness*. Ultimately, force professionalism will produce a more effective and credible ANSF – which in turn will lead to better security for the Afghan people and enhanced legitimacy for the Afghan government and its security forces in the eyes of Afghans everywhere.

Improving ANSF leadership and enabler capacity is also critical to the overall improvement of the force. Improvements in leadership and enabler units will help the ANSF deal with the issue of attrition that, like literacy, remains a challenge for ANSF development. The ANSF continue to expand the quality of their Officer and Non-Commissioned Officer corps. The ANSF's branch schools have also recently begun building a cadre of officers, NCOs, and soldiers focusing on engineering, signals, logistics, and other specialized skills. This has allowed the ANSF and ISAF to focus on building sustainment and enabler capacity that will better posture the ANSF as it assumes the lead, over time, for security across Afghanistan.

We have seen evidence of the more effective and credible ANSF we seek. The ANSF responded very effectively to the 31 July attack at the police headquarters in Lashkar Gah shortly after the area was turned over to Afghan lead as part of the first tranche of transition areas. Similarly, during the 19 August attack on a British diplomatic compound in Kabul that lasted over six

hours, the Afghan National Police responded immediately with reinforcements provided by British forces and New Zealand SAS. Most recently, the ANSF response to the attack on NATO Headquarters and the American Embassy in Kabul on 13 September effectively contained and dealt with the security threat. While all aspects of ANSF responses to situations like these were not perfect, there was evidence of Afghan bravery, skill, and tactical effectiveness. General Allen and his team continue to do routine after-the-fact assessments of these events and others like them in order to highlight ANSF performance and, most importantly, target and then correct deficiencies.

Afghan Institutions as Enablers for Sustained Success

Ambassador Crocker highlighted clearly the importance of Afghan institutions at his swearing in on 25 July, and his comments are applicable to today's discussion. A stronger, more capable ANSF will not impact the security and stability of Afghanistan in a lasting and meaningful way without equally capable and supportive institutions at the Afghan ministerial level. To that end, significant efforts, to include mentoring and advising efforts, are being made to address this. In May 2009, all assessed departments within the Ministry of Defense (MOD), except for two, were rated as "requiring *significant* coalition assistance to accomplish their missions." Fast forward to July 2011: under Defense Minister Wardak's leadership, nineteen departments within the MOD and the General Staff (out of 46 total assessed departments) achieved a rating of "can accomplish its mission with some coalition assistance," eight had achieved a rating of "capable of executing with minimal coalition assistance," and one had been recommended for a CM-1B rating in the Capability Milestone Rating System - meaning the assessed department is "capable of executing functions with coalition oversight only." The Ministry of Interior (MOI) also continues its

institutional growth and development, with three departments projected to reach the CM-1 rating and another fifteen projected to reach a rating of “can accomplish its mission with some coalition assistance” by the end of the 2011. In this regard, MoI leadership has been impressive, and the specific leadership of Minister Mohammadi has been instrumental. We will continue to focus on strengthening ministerial capacity as an absolutely necessary complement to our efforts to sustain the growth of the ANSF well into the future.

Transition

Mr. Chairman, this entire effort to build a professional and sustainable ANSF is tied to enabling Afghan forces to assume primary responsibility for security across the whole of Afghanistan by the end of 2014. Progress in the realm of transition - a conditions-based process that factors in assessments of the security situation, the capacity and effectiveness of the ANSF, the capacity of the government at national and provincial levels, and, ultimately the preferences of the Afghan Government – can already be seen on the ground in Afghanistan. ISAF and the Afghan Government have made tangible progress in arresting the insurgency’s momentum and reversing it in key areas such as Helmand and Kandahar Provinces. This was recently demonstrated by the 20 July transition ceremony conducted in the capital city of Lashkar Gah, Helmand Province. This was one of several transition ceremonies conducted in various parts of Afghanistan during the month of July and sends a powerful signal to the insurgency that the Afghan Government and the ANSF are together becoming increasingly capable in bringing security and stability to the most restive parts of Afghanistan. Progress continues: the second tranche of transition locations is expected to be announced by President Karzai by the end of this month.

Challenges Remain

Despite the successes outlined here, real challenges remain that will require the full measure of our attention. Our professionals in Afghanistan label Afghan leader development as the biggest challenge facing the ANSF. Currently, according to July numbers, Non Commissioned Officer (NCO) staffing lags, with less than 46,000 of the nearly 56,000 Afghan National Army NCO positions on-hand as of July. Similarly, ANA officer staffing lags, although not as significantly. These are not insignificant statistics, as growing professional and competent leaders is vital to stemming attrition of the force, contributing to development of oversight institutions, and forging a mentality of Afghan stewardship necessary for continued growth.

Attrition, the unanticipated loss of an officer, NCO, or soldier, also remains a problem, as Afghan soldiers and police are dropped from the rolls, depart to tend to family matters, die in combat, fight for extended periods in high risk areas, and react to pay and leave policies. The Afghan National Army attrition, at 2.2% in July of this year, exceeded the ANSF attrition goal of 1.4%. Although current attrition rates will not impede attaining growth goals in the near term, attrition could pose a problem for sustaining and professionalizing the force in the longer term.

Literacy, as an essential enabler to the professionalization of the Afghan National Security Forces, also remains a significant challenge considering 28% of the Afghan population is literate and 86% of new ANSF recruits are illiterate. Concerted focus has produced progress and trends appear positive. Of note, literacy training is mandatory in every initial training course, and additional literacy training is also provided in all professional development courses. In concert with our efforts, Afghan instructors are also teaching Afghan students. Literacy rates continue to

increase in both the Afghan Army and police, as almost 120,000 students have graduated from first-, second-, and third-grade literacy programs through August of this year.

In closing, I want to thank the committee for your continued support for the development of the Afghan National Security Forces. Our support for Afghanistan and the ANSF – to include significant support from the international community – must continue if we wish to posture Afghanistan to defeat internal threats. The ANSF remains the linchpin of our strategy – and a successful and lasting outcome depends on ANSF growth and success. The resources that you have made available – and continue to make available – for this key component of the overall effort remain critical to achieving our ends. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this statement today. I look forward to answering your questions.