

**Congressional Testimony
Afghan National Security Forces**

**House Armed Services Committee
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By

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Mr. Chairman, ranking minority and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to testify today on such an important and critical subject--- the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF).

I have conducted four assessments in Afghanistan over an 18 month period, the first three for Gen. Petraeus and the last one for Generals Mattis / Allen in January 2012. During those trips I spent considerable time with US / NATO forces and the ANSF. Let me just say up front that we have achieved much success in the security situation, particularly, in the South which was the priority of the surge forces and we have begun to turn the momentum in the East to our favor. Also, the ANSF is a capable force and is up to the task of taking over from US / NATO forces. However, there are many challenges ahead.

2014 will be a major transition year with political, security and economic transitions all taking place near simultaneous: there will be a national election and a new government and this represents a huge opportunity for Afghanistan and for NATO to move to a more effective and represented government while a significant financial reduction is taking place, largely, due to the transition of US / NATO security forces. I will not comment on the political and economic transitions because they are not the subject of the hearing, but I will say there has been considerable less effort applied to their successful transitions than to the security transition.

There are four key decisions, all to be made within a year's time, which will determine if we can sustain the security success achieved and be able to move Afghanistan to a secure and stable country where the ANSF is capable of protecting its sovereignty and its people.

1. The Post Surge US Forces. After the surge forces are withdrawn, later this year, approximately 68 thousand U.S. forces will remain. These forces should not be reduced until well into 2013 as they are needed to continue the campaign in the East and conduct side by side operations with the ANSF.

Reducing these forces prematurely puts the security transition at risk and will have a negative psychological impact on the ANSF.

2. Funding for the ANSF. Current plans reflect decisions to fund the ANSF at a force level of 352K through 2015 which costs approximately \$6B, largely U.S. funded with some international community (IC) support. Discussions are ongoing to reduce the funding to approximately \$4B which results in an ANSF reduction from 352K to 230K beginning in 2016. This makes no sense. How can we expect the ANSF to protect the people with one third less force only a year after we almost zero out a US / NATO force of 100K. The issue is less than \$2B a year. We have spent over a decade investing in training and equipping the ANSF. By 2014 we will have the results of that investment, an ANSF capable of protecting its people. Why, after all these years of investing, would we gut that force and put the entire security mission at risk. It is even more difficult to understand when you consider that U.S. and NATO countries spend trillions of dollars every year, yet clearly some of that funding does not enjoy the priority of a secure and stable Afghanistan. In terms of a timetable the ANSF funding should remain through 2020 as part of our Strategic Partnership Agreement. Of course, as Afghans are able to pay an even greater share, then that should be expected. A 230K ANSF beginning in 2016 would have disastrous impact on the morale of the force and, in of itself, almost certainly guarantees the return of Taliban domination.
3. The Residual US / NATO Force Post 2014. This force should be sized for the missions that are vital to continued success. It should not be an arbitrary number. The missions required are :
 - a. Counter-terrorism – sufficient force with enablers to conduct daily missions against high value targets in partnership with Afghan special operations forces.
 - b. Training assistance – forces required to assist in the continued growth and development of the ANSF.
 - c. Security – forces required to protect the residual forces. This is a defensive not an offensive mission.
 - d. Enablers – there are three forces that require enablers yet not necessarily the same type of enablers. Those forces are counter terrorism, the IC residual forces and the ANSF. As to the ANSF, and in their case we are really talking about, the Army, it is primarily a ground maneuver force which needs support from the following

functions: intelligence, artillery, aviation, engineers and logistics to include medical evacuation. The ANSF intelligence function is almost exclusively human intelligence and they are very good at it but they have no technology: sensors, UAV's, listening devices to monitor radio and cell phone communication, etc. The plan for ANSF aviation is a fleet of Russian made attack and utility helicopters and the C27 (Italian made), fixed wing, for transport. All this equipment is inferior and difficult to maintain and, in time, it should be switched out to US helicopters and the C130 as part of the US / Afghan long term partnership. The ANSF has no route and mine clearing equipment and this should be a part of an anti-IED package that is provided.

The remaining key decision which will greatly impact overall ANSF success is the decision to target Afghan Taliban sanctuaries in Pakistan.

4. Afghan Taliban Sanctuaries – Ever since the Taliban regime was deposed in 2001, and the Taliban and the Haggani networks were driven out of Afghanistan, two sanctuaries have existed in Pakistan. One at Miram Shah for the Haggani network and the other at Quetta for the senior Taliban leadership. Think of these sanctuaries as loosely knitted military bases with the following functions: command and control, intelligence, training and logistics to include family housing and barracks. At these bases, leaders set the strategy, brief middle level leaders who return from the fight in Afghanistan, plan future operations, provide intelligence to field commanders, train or re-fit fighters and bombers and provide resources and logistics to their field units. Furthermore, the Pakistan Army, particularly the ISI provide intelligence on US / NATO operations, training and logistics support. As a result, the Taliban have managed to protract a war for over eight years which has eroded the political and moral will of the American people and our NATO partners. The ANSF is willing but not capable to do anything about it, while the US is capable but unwilling. Indeed, we have permitted Afghanistan to be destabilized because we are unwilling to force Pakistan to withdraw its support for the sanctuaries or for the US to attack the sanctuaries. We are paralyzed by our fear of Pakistan reaction which could entail increased support for the insurgency inside of Pakistan and a risk to regime change, closing the ground main support route, denying use of the port of Karachi and denying use of the air LOC over Pakistan. While I am not dismissing these concerns as real, I am saying the relationship with Pakistan should change from a normal ally relationship of cooperation to a condition based partnership. Support for Pakistan's fight against the

insurgents, support with the IMF and World Bank, support to sustain the military and the regime with financial aid should all be conditional, based on their withdrawing support for the sanctuaries. We should be clear to the Paks that we would not only withdraw the support listed above but we would attack the sanctuaries without their permission. If the US / NATO permits the sanctuaries to exist post 2014 without impeding their functions then there is little chance of long term success in Afghanistan. The Taliban will eventually regroup, regain territory and influence over the people in Afghanistan and begin to dominate once again.

A drone campaign against the leaders in the sanctuaries would have a similar effect that our drone campaign has had against the Al Qaeda (AQ) in the FATA i.e., the AQ is defensive and can no longer control or project operational capability. A similar effect against the leadership in the sanctuaries would be a game changer in Afghanistan, breaking the effectiveness and morale of the Taliban while significantly enhancing the morale and impact of the ANSF.

In conclusion, these four key decisions I discussed will determine the future stability and security of Afghanistan. This has been our longest war in our history, and most of that is of our own choosing, because the war in Iraq enjoyed a higher priority, the Taliban reemerged, and it was not until 2008/09 after we finally achieved success in Iraq that we were able to devote the kind of resources and priorities that Afghanistan always deserved to have. Now we are on the cusp of ending our participation in our longest war. Never before in our great nation, have so few, served for so long, on behalf of so many. War is fundamentally a test of wills and that is why leadership is always at a premium. This effort has enjoyed your support and it begs for your continued leadership and support as we begin to write the final chapters.

Ryan Crocker our distinguished and capable Ambassador in Afghanistan and former Ambassador in Iraq and Pakistan has said: “how we leave a war and what we leave behind is far more important than how we began”.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.