

# **U.S. Policy in Afghanistan**

**Prepared Statement of  
The Honorable Peter W. Rodman  
Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs  
Before the  
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Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and distinguished Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to have this opportunity to discuss with you our policy in Afghanistan, the progress we have made, and the work still ahead.

The Afghan people, with support from the United States and the international community, have dedicated themselves to rebuilding their country in the face of many great challenges. Afghanistan has come through an extraordinary ordeal lasting a generation. It has endured a Communist coup, the Soviet occupation, a war of liberation against the Soviets, followed by civil war and the Taliban's fanatical rule. Overcoming this legacy remains a daunting task. But the last year has demonstrated an undeniable will on the part of the Afghan people to embrace a promising future, with over 8 million citizens casting their ballots last October to elect a president. The past year's events also reflect a deep and long-term commitment on the part of President Bush, this administration, and the Congress -- a bipartisan commitment -- to support the nation of Afghanistan.

I would like to note the exceptional tenures of Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad and Lt. General David Barno. They did an extraordinary job -- helping shape United States policy through a complex period, and giving crucial advice and support to our Afghan friends. They rose to the occasion with tremendous skill and commitment. I have great confidence in Ambassador Ronald Neumann, the President's nominee to succeed Zal Khalilzad, and in Lieutenant General Karl Eikenberry. They both bring significant expertise and knowledge of the region to the mission in Afghanistan.

## Landmark Accomplishments

It is important to remember how much has been accomplished since December 2001, when Afghan and Coalition forces liberated the country from the Taliban and ended the country's generation-long ordeal.

- In December 2001, Afghan leaders concluded the Bonn Agreement, creating an Interim Government, which subsequently was expanded into a Transitional Government by the Emergency Loya Jirga (a Council of Elders) of June 2002.
- In January 2004, a Constitutional Loya Jirga ratified a new constitution, one of the most enlightened political charters in the Muslim world.
- On October 9, 2004, the Afghan people directly elected their own president, Hamid Karzai. Despite the uncertain security situation, the United Nations reported that over 10 million Afghans registered to vote (41% of whom were women). Voters chose from 18 presidential candidates. Some 22,000 polling stations were set up across Afghanistan. Out-of-country voters in Pakistan and Iran accounted for over one million eligible voters. The election was observed by international monitors who declared it “free and fair”.

#### US Strategy: Long-Term Commitment based upon Strategic Partnership

Our goal for Afghanistan is a moderate, democratic government that is capable of controlling its national territory and achieving economic self-sufficiency. We have adopted a set of strategies that reflect this goal and confront the various challenges still present.

An important recent milestone occurred on May 23, 2005, during President Karzai’s most recent visit to Washington, when he and President Bush signed the “Joint Declaration of US – Afghanistan Strategic Partnership”. That document expressed a joint commitment to Afghanistan’s “long-term security, democracy and prosperity.” It outlined a way ahead for cooperation between the two countries in these three areas.

Specifically, the United States will continue to provide training and support to Afghan security forces. The agreement maintains a consultative relationship with Afghanistan to ensure its territorial independence and security. We will work closely with the Afghan Government on counter-terrorism operations, counternarcotics, intelligence-sharing, and border security initiatives. The United States intends to engage the Afghan people to cultivate political and civic institutions that encourage broad based participation and uphold the rule of law and human rights. We also agreed to encourage close cooperation and constructive relations between Afghanistan and its regional neighbors. Finally, to support economic development, the United States will remain committed to the reconstruction process. We will encourage foreign investment and help assimilate Afghanistan into the global economy and its related international organizations.

Any who wish to see the United States and its partners abandon Afghanistan have received a clear signal to the contrary: US support for Afghanistan will not fade. It will, instead, mature into a longer-term strategic partnership between two countries, both committed to peace and freedom. As the 9/11 Commission recommended, this is the kind of long-term commitment that will support the Afghan government in its efforts to extend its sovereign authority throughout the national territory, to ensure that it is never again a safe haven for terrorists, and to build a decent life for its citizens under the rule of law.

### Elections

Our strategy in Afghanistan is political as much as it is military: The legitimacy of a democratically elected government is the most powerful weapon against the extremists -- marginalizing them politically even as Afghan and Coalition forces hunt them down militarily.

On September 18, 2005 the Afghan people are scheduled to return to the polls to elect their National Assembly and to create representative councils at the provincial level. In the October 2004 presidential election, the United States and the international community gave important support -- technical support -- and also support in protecting security. We are working, as we did last year before presidential election, to help Afghanistan prepare for the National Assembly elections. An elected National Assembly (provincial councils have no governance responsibilities and councils will not be elected in this election) will give Afghans true ownership of their nation's future.

Planning for this milestone event is well under way. Over 6,000 individuals have been nominated for national and provincial council positions. Candidates are being vetted to exclude those with links to the illegal armed groups or who are otherwise ineligible. Voter registration will begin on June 25, supported by programs of public outreach and civic education.

In a country as diverse and inexperienced in electoral politics as Afghanistan, the enthusiasm of Afghan citizens is heartening. International efforts, including US pledges of over \$30 million, demonstrate strong support. We can expect a rise in attempts by Al Qaeda, the Taliban and other spoilers to disrupt this process, as they attempted last fall. The United States and the coalition are working alongside the Afghan government to ensure that the citizens of Afghanistan can cast their votes in a secure, stable environment. Pakistan has indicated that it will make an extra effort in securing the border against terrorists seeking to disrupt the election. Pakistan's support last fall was critical to the success of the Presidential election.

#### Increasing Role for NATO and Provincial Reconstruction Teams

NATO has taken on an increasingly important role in the security dimension in Afghanistan, including in preparation for the upcoming election. NATO is expanding the size of its International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) for the presidential election; it will, expand by three battalions, which will arrive several weeks before the election. ISAF and US forces will provide communications support and a quick reaction capability to bolster the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police as they provide security to polling sites and surrounding areas during the election period.

NATO's growing involvement in the deployment and command of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) also reflects its commitment to take on a greater role in Afghanistan's future. The 19 existing Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan have been a success story; they support the extension of the national government's reach, they improve security, and they facilitate reconstruction. In late May, ISAF took command of two additional PRTs in western Afghanistan, bringing its total to seven. Spain and Lithuania have agreed to take the lead on two additional teams in the west this July. ISAF plans to assume responsibility for PRT operations in southern Afghanistan under Phase III of its expansion planned for the coming year.

The United States looks forward eventually to the merger of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and ISAF. Such a merger will have to be based on a common understanding not only of the broad strategic objectives in Afghanistan, but on the role and missions of PRTs. In the meantime, there is already close coordination between Coalition operations in OEF and the NATO/ISAF presence.

The PRT concept includes a significant civilian component, to assist the Afghan reconstruction effort and support to national government. Continued funding support, such as from the Commanders' Emergency Response Program (CERP) and from USAID's Quick Impact Program, is also essential for the effectiveness of the PRT mission.

### Building Afghan Capacity

While the presence of international forces on the ground is critical to Afghanistan's progress, one of our highest priorities is to build Afghanistan's own security capabilities. The United States has accelerated the training of the Afghan National Army and, at present, this force stands at over 24,000. An additional 5,000 troops will be trained in time for the election, and, by September 2009, we expect the army to be fully operational. The Afghan National Police force represents another critical segment of the Afghan security sector. As the lead nation for police, Germany built a police academy in Kabul that is providing training to ensure a well-trained officer corps.

The United States is increasing its involvement in police training and has begun a nation-wide mentoring program for Afghan police. We have also accelerated the training of patrolmen through the establishment of seven regional training centers. Training programs have been tailored to the specific needs and challenges of the Afghan security environment, including specialized training for highway, border and counternarcotics police.

The US Defense and State Departments are working in partnership to help field a professional police force. At present, the Department of Defense is augmenting the State Department's program by offering infrastructure, communications and other equipment for the national police, as well as the border and highway police. The Afghan police force (national, highway, border and counternarcotics) includes over 41,000 trained personnel, with an expected force increase of 9,000 by the time of the September elections. The growing US involvement in police training reflects an understanding that while the ANA will provide a sense of national unity and establish Afghanistan's security within the region, an effective police force offers ordinary citizens the sense of security necessary to pursue their livelihoods in an environment of crime, corruption, and drugs.

The considerable support of the Congress has enabled the significant acceleration we see in the Afghan security sector. Your continued support will help ensure Afghanistan's eventual self-sufficiency.

### Challenging Security Situation

A host of challenges remain, especially in the security field. For the past few years, Afghanistan's pursuit of security and stability has been hindered by major obstacles:

- the presence of insurgents who found safe haven in the rugged border area between Afghanistan and Pakistan and continue to attack Afghan officials, U.S. Coalition and Afghan forces international aid workers and reconstruction projects;
- warlord militias that resist the authority of the national government and often prey upon ordinary citizens;
- general crime and lawlessness that deepen a sense of insecurity among ordinary citizens.

We are addressing the security challenges through OEF, NATO/ISAF and the training programs I have described. I would, however, like to note also the growing success of Afghanistan's new "Strengthening Peace" Program -- an amnesty initiative to reconcile former insurgents. This program offers amnesty to militants who surrender to the national government. Senior leaders of the insurgency, who might be prosecuted for war crimes, are not eligible. Earlier this month, eighteen commanders from Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami surrendered in the southeastern province of Paktia. The Afghan Government, with the full legitimacy that comes from the democratic election process, is in a strong position now to reach out to former opponents -- to coopt them and to further isolate the extremists so long as it can publicly clarify the details and procedures of the program and give it wide, uniformed implementation.

The Afghan Government and the international community have also made significant strides in diminishing the role and power of warlords and their private militias. When I last met with you in April 2004, around 16,000 combatants had been disarmed. The United Nations announced last week that the Afghan Government has successfully disarmed all of the estimated 60,000 former Afghan militia force members and will officially complete the disarmament process at the end of June. Without delay, the Afghan Government announced a new program to disband illegal armed groups and give a final opportunity to those wishing to seek office in the National Assembly to demobilize. The aim is to accelerate the completion of the demobilization process and diminish the influence of these armed groups in advance of the National Assembly and provincial elections.

President Karzai has also taken several steps that diminished the power of several regional commanders, while drawing others into the national government to take on constructive political and ministerial positions. The government's commitment to disarmament has convinced many factional leaders to canton their weapons (100% of known heavy weapons have been cantoned) and to demobilize their forces, some of whom have joined the ranks of the national army. While militias are being disarmed and demobilized, however, many of their forces continue to engage in criminal activities in the absence of an alternative means of reintegration into their communities. This is a continuing challenge that must be addressed through programs to expand economic opportunity.

Another means to improve the sense of security of ordinary Afghans is to improve law enforcement. A robust legal system with a sound judiciary is essential. Progress on this front has been slower than expected. The establishment of legal codes, courts, prisons, police-related infrastructure, and trained judges and lawyers must accelerate. The United States has been working closely with the Afghan Government and with Italy, the lead international supporter in this area, to place judges on the bench, to build judicial facilities, and train attorneys. Our objective is a system of law enforcement consistent with international human rights standards. We and our international partners need to do more, including building the capacity of an Afghan penal system. The rule of law not only limits corruption, violence and the drug trade; it is a precondition for a modern economy and a healthy civil society.

## Counternarcotics

Much of Afghanistan's insecure environment can be traced to the narcotics trade, perhaps the most significant constraint today on Afghanistan's stability and growth. Unfortunately, the international community has no easy solutions. The narcotics trade undermines security at many levels: it represents a source of revenue to be exploited by terrorists and extremists; it fills the coffers of warlords and drug lords who dominate at the country's periphery; it heightens the level of crime and insecurity experienced by Afghans. And it maintains an economic stranglehold on farmers who produce poppy; they receive only a subsistence wage, while enriching those who traffic their yield.

While the United States and its international partners may not have any quick fixes, we are committed to intensifying the international effort. The United Kingdom has led the effort to accelerate counternarcotics programs in Afghanistan; as the lead US agency, the Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement has coordinated closely with the British. In 2006, the Department of Defense will continue to support the development of counternarcotics-related infrastructure, including border and highway police headquarters and an intelligence fusion center. We will also maintain our commitment to provide police with the helicopters necessary to make them mobile, while offering training and mentorship in the field.

A counternarcotics strategy must be comprehensive, and at its core it must strengthen the capacity of the Afghan Government to fight the narcotics trade. Afghan capacity-building is the crucial objective. We are helping Afghans to build institutions that improve the criminal justice system, that provide alternative livelihoods for farmers, repentant traffickers and demobilized combatants, and that enable the national government to govern and to generate legitimate revenue throughout the country. There are clearly interconnections among our efforts to improve security, to fight narcotics, and to provide economic opportunity. Efforts to improve border security, including the Integrated Border Security Zone Initiative and the training of border police, will not only reduce narco-trafficking across the border but also mitigate cross-border violence and the flow of extremists and contraband into and out of Afghanistan. Moreover, they will improve the government's capacity to collect revenue. We must also continue to ensure Pakistan's cooperation in controlling illegal activities across the border.



In the final analysis, Afghans must be motivated to build a society free of the scourge of narcoterrorism. A June 2005 poll by the Center for Strategic and International Studies confirms that the Afghan public “believe[s] poppy is bad for the development of their country.” President Karzai has made counternarcotics a national priority, creating a new Cabinet-level office to mobilize the national effort. Poppy cultivation and consumption are contrary to the tenets of Islam and have devastated the lives of many Afghans. We know we are a long way from turning the tide against the narcotics trade and its corrosive influence in Afghanistan. We are continuously reviewing and refining our policy in this area, given its clear importance.

### Reconstruction Achievements and Conclusion

To conclude, I would like to underscore the commitment on the part of the United States to Afghanistan’s future. In the Strategic Partnership that President Bush and President Karzai established a few weeks ago, the United States has dedicated itself to supporting the Afghan people and their government in the pursuit of stability, growth, democracy and self-reliance. The US commitment remains important to galvanizing the international commitment that is necessary.

Though it is wise for the Administration and Congress to focus on the challenges we continue to face, Afghanistan remains a success story. The great gains the Afghans have achieved owe a lot to the support of the US Congress. Sustaining that commitment is the way to ensure that Afghans are given the maximum chance to advance successfully on the course on which they are embarked.

Thank you.