HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON STRATEGIC OPTIONS FOR THE WAY AHEAD IN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2009

U.S. SENATE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:34 a.m. in Room SH–216, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. Carl Levin, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

Committee Members Present: Senators Levin [presiding], Reed, Bill Nelson, E. Benjamin Nelson, Bayh, Webb, McCaskill, Udall, Hagan, Begich, Burris, McCain, Inhofe, Sessions, Thune, Martinez, and Collins.

Committee staff members present: Richard D. DeBobes, Staff Director; and Leah C. Brewer, Nominations and Hearings Clerk.

Majority staff members present: Thomas K. McConnell, Professional Staff Member; William G.P. Monahan, Counsel; Michael J. Noblet, Professional Staff Member; Russell L. Shaffer, Counsel; and William K. Sutey, Professional Staff Member.

Minority staff members present: Joseph W. Bowab, Republican Staff Director; Adam J. Barker, Research assistant; William M. Caniano, Professional Staff Member; Richard H. Fontaine, Jr., Deputy Republican Staff Director; Paul C. Hutton IV, Professional Staff Member; David M. Morriss, Minority Counsel; and Lucian L. Niemeyer, Professional Staff Member.

Staff assistants present: Kevin A. Cronin, Christine G. Lang, and Ali Z. Pasha.

Committee members' assistants present: Jay Maroney, assistant to Senator Kennedy; Sharon L. Waxman, assistant to Senator Kennedy; James Tuite, assistant to Senator Byrd; Vance Serchuk, assistant to Senator Lieberman; Elizabeth King, assistant to Senator Reed; Ann Premer, assistant to Senator Ben Nelson; Jon Davey, assistant to Senator Bayh; Mike Pevzner, assistant to Senator Bayh; Gordon I. Peterson, assistant to Senator Webb; Stephen C. Hedger, assistant to Senator McCaskill; Jennifer Barrett, assistant to Senator Udall; Michael Harney, assistant to Senator Hagan; David Ramseur, assistant to Senator Begich; Brady King, Assisant to Senator Burris; Anthony J. Lazarski, assistant to Senator Inhofe; Lenwood Landrum, assistant to Senator Sessions; Sandra Luff, assistant to Senator Sessions; Matt Waldroup, assistant to Senator Chambliss; Adam G. Brake, assistant to Senator Graham; Jason Van Beek, assistant to Senator Thune; Brian W. Walsh, assistant

to Senator Martinez; and Chip Kenneth, assistant to Senator Collins.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CARL LEVIN, CHAIRMAN

Chairman LEVIN. Good morning, everybody. Today the Committee receives testimony from outside experts on options for the way ahead in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Our witnesses are: Lieutenant General David Barno, U.S. Army Retired, who is the Director of the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies at the National Defense University; Ambassador James Dobbins, Director of the International Security and Defense Policy Center of the RAND Corporation; and Dr. Marin Strmecki, Senior Vice President and Director of Programs with the Smith Richardson Foundation.

We welcome each of you. We thank you and we are grateful for your attendance and for your testimony.

The current policies of the United States and its allies are not succeeding and stabilizing Afghanistan. The Defense Department reports that insurgent-initiated attacks are up 40 percent in 2008 over the previous year. The Director of National Intelligence, Dennis Blair, testified earlier this month that the Taliban-dominated insurgency has increased the geographic scope and frequency of attacks and that security in eastern areas and the south and northwest has ″deteriorated.″

The United Nations announced this month that Afghan civilian deaths reached a new high last year of 2118 and that U.S., NATO, and Afghan operations, particularly air strikes, were responsible for nearly 40 percent of the civilians killed. A recent public opinion poll showed declining support among the Afghan people for coalition efforts and a loss of legitimacy for the Afghan government of President Karzai. Of those surveyed, a majority viewed the United States unfavorably, with fewer than half, 42 percent, having confidence in coalition forces to provide security where they lived.

A main source of Afghanistan's insecurity and instability comes from Pakistan. The Afghan Taliban, extremist militant groups, and Al Qaeda fighters use Pakistan's federally Assisted Tribal Areas and the Baluchistan region around Quetta as a safe haven from which to launch attacks into Afghanistan. President Obama has recognized the declining security situation and that it cannot wait for the completion of a comprehensive policy review and has approved Secretary Gates's request to deploy an additional 17,000 U.S. troops, including key enablers, to Afghanistan by this spring and summer. This increase on top of the more than 35,000 American troops already in Afghanistan and 32,000 other foreign forces participating in the NATO International Security Assistance Force will provide needed capabilities, particularly in the Regional Command South, where, according to Deputy Commanding General for Stabilization Brigadier General John Nicholson, the border is wide open for extremist militants to attack from sanctuaries on Pakistan's territory.

Recently, Director of National Intelligence Dennis

Blair stated to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence: ″No improvement in the security in Afghanistan is possible without progress in Pakistan.″ And he added: ″No improvement in Afghanistan is possible without Pakistan taking control of its border areas

and improving governance, creating economic and educational opportunities throughout the country.″

I disagree with his unqualified assessment. While actions by the government of Pakistan that would root out the Afghan Taliban in Pakistan's Baluchistan region surely would be helpful, Afghanistan's security cannot be totally dependent on Pakistan's uncertain efforts to eliminate militant sanctuaries along the Afghan-Pakistan border, for many reasons. I question whether Pakistan has the political will or the capability to take on the Taliban and other militants. Evidence of their unwillingness or inability to do so has been clear and longstanding. There have been reports for some time that the Afghan Taliban council, or shura, meets in the Pakistan city of Quetta and commands attacks in southern Afghanistan from that safe haven.

The militant Battila Basoud, who is suspected by the Pakistan government itself of orchestrating the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, holds an open press conference in South Waziristan. To make matters worse, the Pakistan government inflames opposition to the United States with their strong public criticism of our air strikes. Afghan Taliban cross unhampered from Pakistan's Baluchistan area into southern Afghanistan. There is evidence indicating that some elements of Pakistan's intelligence service may provide support to militants conducting cross-border incursions into Afghanistan and at a minimum Pakistani forces look the other way while the extremist militants cross over the border to attack coalition forces in southern and eastern Afghanistan and then pull back to sanctuaries on Pakistan's side of the border.

The bottom line for me is that we need to accelerate the planned expansion of the highly motivated and capable Afghan army and to more quickly erase the shortfall in U.S. and allied training and mentoring teams embedded with Afghan security forces. In addition, the Afghan army needs to take the lead in countering the greatest threat to their security, the threat from cross-border attacks from militants in those sanctuaries in the Pakistan border.

The Afghan border police, with its history of corruption, should either be transferred from the ministry of interior to the ministry of defense, as promised, by the way, long ago, or dramatically retrained and reformed.

At this Committee's hearing on January 27th, Secretary of Gates warned against trying to create a ″central Asian Valhalla″ in Afghanistan. He has called for more concrete goals, security for the Afghan people and better delivery of services, that are achievable within a 3 to 5-year time frame.

The United States cannot and should not bear the burden alone of meeting the additional requirements for the Afghan mission. Over 40 NATO and other allies are contributing to that mission. However, NATO members have yet to fulfil the mission requirements that NATO agreed to for personnel and critical support like airlift and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets. A new strategy should call upon our NATO and other allies either to provide additional forces and capabilities or, if they will not do so, they should help defray the costs of training and sustaining the Afghan national security forces or assisting Afghanistan in building its capacity to govern itself.

The administration's strategic review needs to also look at how we can bring all instruments of national power to bear in Afghanistan, particularly our civilian tools of diplomacy, development, and the rule of law. I am encouraged to hear that the State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development are looking to increase their civilian presence in Afghanistan at the National, provincial, and district levels.

I saw firsthand how development assistance at the local level can serve as a key enabler of the security mission when I visited a primary school near Bagram which was built with funding through the Afghan National Solidarity Program. Three villages had come together to pool very modest amounts of money to construct that school to give their boys and girls a better life and they were prepared to defend it with their lives against the Taliban.

We look forward to hearing from our witnesses. We very much appreciate their contributions to the debate as we look to the ways forward.

Now I'll call on Senator McCain for his opening comments.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN McCAIN

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for holding this hearing today. I join you in welcoming our witnesses. Each is a well-regarded specialist with extensive experience in the region.

More than 3 years ago, some of us called for a major change in our strategy in Iraq. The change in strategy in Iraq that we called for was one based on the fundamental principles of counterinsurgency, the imperative to secure the civilian population, and a significant increase in the number of American troops. As we know now, through the courageous efforts of our troops on the ground and the wisdom of leaders such as General David Petraeus and Mr. Ryan Crocker and General Ray Odierno, the situation has been reversed in Iraq.

We face a similar moment now with respect to the war in Afghanistan. Nearly every indicator in Afghanistan now is headed in the wrong direction. Many Americans have begun to wonder whether it's truly possible to turn this war around. Commentators increasingly focus on past failures in Afghanistan by the Soviets and British. Others have suggested that it's time to scale back our objectives in Afghanistan, to give up on nation-building and instead focus narrowly on counterterrorism.

I for one remain confident that victory is indeed possible in Afghanistan, but only with a significant change in strategy. We all know that the American people are weary of sending our young men and women off to where in such a distant land. But it's absolutely critical they understand the stakes in this fight. We must win the war in Afghanistan because the alternative is to risk that country's reversion to its previous role as a terrorist sanctuary, one from which Al Qaeda could train and plan attacks against America. Such an outcome would constitute an historic blow to America's standing and in favor of the jihadist movement and severely damage America's standing and credibility in a region that already has doubts about our staying power, and deal a crushing blow to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

A terrorist sanctuary in Afghanistan would enable Al Qaeda and other groups to attempt to destabilize neighboring countries, such as nuclear-armed Pakistan. Broader insecurity in Afghanistan, with the violence refugee flows, and lawlessness it would prompt, could spill beyond its borders to Pakistan or other states in south and central Asia, with grave implications for our National security.

The problem in Afghanistan today is that we have tried to win this war without enough troops, without sufficient economic aid, without effective coordination, and without a regional strategy. The ruinous consequences should come as no surprise. If we change our policies, the situation on the ground too will change.

I say this with some confidence because we've been through this before, and I refer not to Iraq, but to Afghanistan itself. For a brief but critical window between late 2003 and early 2005, we were moving onto the right path in Afghanistan. Under then-Ambassador Khalilzad and Commander Lieutenant General Barno, who is with us today, the United States completely overhauled its strategy. We increased the number of American forces in the country, expanded non-military assistance to the Afghan government, and, most importantly, abandoned a counterterrorism-based strategy that emphasized seeking out and attacking the enemy in favor of one that emphasized counterinsurgency.

All of this was overseen by an integrated civil- military command structure in which the ambassador and the coalition commander worked in the same building from adjoining offices. The result was that by late 2004 governance and reconstruction were improving. Projects like the Ring Road were at last getting off the ground. Warlords were being nudged out of power. Militias like the Northern Alliance were being peacefully disarmed of their heavy weapons and national elections were carried off safely. The Taliban, meanwhile, showed some signs of internal dissension and splintering.

Rather than building on these gains, we squandered them. I believe that we need in Afghanistan a counterinsurgency strategy focused on providing security for the population, tailored for the unique situation in Afghanistan, and backed with robust intelligence resources and a sufficient number of troops to carry it out. This strategy must be outlined in a theater-wide civil-military campaign plan.

We should also more than double the current size of the Afghan army to 160,000 troops and consider enlarging it to 200,000. The cost of this increase, however, should not be borne by American taxpayers alone. The insecurity in Afghanistan is the world's problem and the world should share its costs. In addition, I believe the United States should continue to invite European troop contributions and press for the reduction of caveats on their use.

I also believe we should move away from stressing what Washington wants Europe to give and more toward encouraging what Europe is prepared to contribute. Many of our NATO allies and other allies and partners outside NATO, including the Gulf countries, are fully capable of contributing many badly needed resources.

We also must increase our non-military assistance to the Afghan government, with a multi-front plan, something akin to a Plan Af-

ghanistan, for strengthening its institutions, the rule of law, and the economy in order to provide a sustainable alternative to the drug trade.

Afghanistan's problems exist of course in a regional context and we must increasingly view them as such. A special focus of our regional strategy must be Pakistan. For too long we have viewed Pakistan as important because of our goals in Afghanistan. Yet Pakistan is not simply important because of Afghanistan. Pakistan is important because of Pakistan. We cannot simply subordinate our Pakistan strategy to our Afghanistan policy.

I especially look forward to our witnesses' testimony regarding the role of Pakistan, its present state, and its role in the region.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you. I welcome our witnesses here today and look forward to their observations on this crucial issue. This issue, the situation in Afghanistan, will be with us for a long time. It's going to be long, it's going to be hard, it's going to be tough. It will require additional, I'm sorry to say, expenditure of American blood and treasure. We need the input of our witnesses today, among others, to help us shape the strategy that will succeed. We cannot afford to lose.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Senator McCain follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator McCain.

[Whereupon, at 9:51 a.m., the hearing was recessed and the Committee proceeded to other business; the hearing reconvened at 9:52 a.m.]

Chairman LEVIN. General Barno.

STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL DAVID W. BARNO, U.S. ARMY [RET.], DIRECTOR, NEAR EAST SOUTH ASIA CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES, NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

General Barno: Chairman Levin, Ranking Member Senator

McCain, and members of the Committee on Armed Services: Thank you very much for the invitation to offer my views today on strategic options for the way ahead in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Although I continue to serve in the U.S. Defense Department at the National Defense University, the views I offer today are my own. In addition to my 19 months as the overall U.S. and coalition commander in Afghanistan from late 2003 until mid–2005, I've remained engaged on these issues in my current job, which has included trips to Afghanistan and Pakistan, in fact included a visit to Regional Command South just last month for 3 days in Kandahar, Zabul, and Helmand Province.

On a more personal note, my youngest son just returned from a 12-month tour of combat in Afghanistan as an air cavalry scout platoon leader in the 101st Airborne Division. We're very proud of him. We're very grateful to have him home safe and we pray every day for his fellow young Americans that are still in harm's way.

My brief remarks this morning will attempt to summarize a more lengthy written testimony that I've provided. The focus that I'd like to bring today is to understanding U.S. goals, defining our core objectives, identifying what I call first principles for success, and depicting a phased approach to a military strategy. I'll also

briefly speak to issues that link Afghanistan and Pakistan because that linkage is very important.

My thinking I would note also reflects a good deal of collaboration and discussion with Dr. David Kilkullen, a counterinsurgency expert and former Australian Army officer, although I'm only speaking for myself here today.

In my judgment the international effort in Afghanistan at the beginning of 2009 is drifting towards failure. There's still time to turn it around, but it will take strong U.S. leadership, a change of strategic direction, and a focused and substantial effort. Results will not come from continuing business as usual or simply adding more resources. Major change is essential.

Fundamental questions remain for both the international and the U.S. effort: Who is in charge? What's the plan? What does success look like? Today the U.S. and international goals at times seem unclear at best.

I would say any discussion of reversing the downward trajectory today must start with a discussion of objectives: What is winning? Can we win? And maybe even the most fundamental question: Who is ″we″?

Core objectives I think include several for the U.S. Winning for the United States in this context equates to achieving American policy objectives in Afghanistan and in the region. I would outline them as follows.

First, that the Taliban and Al Qaeda are defeated in the region and denied useable sanctuary and that further attacks on the United States and our allies are avoided.

Second, that Pakistan is stabilized as a long-term partner that is economically viable, friendly to the United States, no longer an active base for international terrorism, and in control of its nuclear weapons.

Third, success for NATO: the trans-Atlantic alliance preserved, with NATO's role in Afghanistan recast into a politically sustainable set of objectives.

Fourth, a stable and sustainable Afghan government that's legitimate in the eyes of the Afghan people, capable of exercising effective governance and in control of its territory.

Then finally, the regional states are confident of U.S. staying power and commitment as their partner in the long-term regional struggle against violent extremism.

I would offer that in order to achieve these objectives a mathematical equation might be in order, an equation which sounded like this: that success achieving those objectives equals leadership plus strategy plus resources, leadership plus strategy plus resources.

Our system will tend to distort our focus towards the resource component, towards generating more troops, dollars, and euros, more aid workers and police mentors, and that will absorb tremendous amounts of our energy. But resources cannot be a substitute for the lack of a plan, nor can they take the place of the most essential ingredient, which is the dynamic leadership needed to deliver success.

None of this is new. What is new, however, I think is the growing recognition among even our allies that today's fractious mix of all the different players in Afghanistan cannot effectively reverse

the trend lines without strong American leadership. Resources poured into a disjointed strategy with fragmented leadership produce stalemate, and that's a description we often hear used with regard to Afghanistan today. Stalemate in a counterinsurgency represents a win for the insurgent.

So I think in order to address this we ought to think about focusing first on what I call first principles, things we need to do to set conditions for a new approach. The first of those I would characterize as making the Afghan people the center of gravity of all of our efforts. We say this today, but the practical application of this is very uneven across the country. The Afghan people down to the local level are the ultimate judgers, arbiters, of success in Afghanistan. International civil and military activities that alienate the Afghan people, that offend their cultural sensibilities, or further separate them from their government are doomed to fail. Protecting the Afghan people and nurturing their hope and cautious optimism for a better future is an essential requirement of our collective success in Afghanistan.

The second item is creating true unity of effort, a critical principle that we again speak about today often, but we rarely find in the field. It's unity of effort within the military arena and between the civil and the military spheres. Ultimate success is really integrating those two effectively on the ground. We've spent countless dollars and tens of thousands of troops' efforts in Afghanistan over the past 8 years, but a very sober assessment would conclude that the whole has totaled far less than the sum of the parts.

The enemy seeks to disrupt our unity of effort. We have given him many of the tools to do so. Only by dramatically improving the coherence of our military effort and by fully connecting it to the civil reconstruction, governance, and development efforts can effective progress be made.

Third and final principle: There has to be a simultaneous bottoms-up and top-down approach in Afghanistan. The current ongoing debate between strengthening the central government versus strengthening capacity at the local level must be ended. Afghanistan requires both a capable national government in Kabul and an effective local set of institutions at the province, district, and village level. They have seen this in their history 30, 40 years ago.

Action in this arena has to be two-pronged. In Kabul, the international community must focus on the central government in building key capacity there. In local areas, at the province and the district level and down to the village level, bottoms-up action will be required, and in many cases it will have to be enabled and led by military efforts, especially in the south, which is the least secure part of the country.

In the south and east of Afghanistan, because of poor security military forces will have to lead civil actors in this enterprise. In the north a much different scenario exists. In fact, I typically call the north of Afghanistan the stability zone and the south of Afghanistan the counterinsurgency zone. In the north, civil efforts and peacekeeping operations by NATO military forces are appropriate. In the south, because of the lack of security, because of the violence, military-led efforts, often by the United States, leading the civilian enterprise are essential.

With the foundation provided by these principles, an overarching counterinsurgency approach must be developed. It has to be tailored to the nuances and differences in each region, but it has to be one strategy, and a unified strategy must include counternarcotics, rule of law, governance, development, building security forces, and counterterrorism, all within a single strategy, all very doable, and all something we've seen before in Afghanistan, but what does not exist today.

Without this unified strategy, I think we will continue on the current path. A change in approach can only be led by the United States.

At the operational level, which is where strategy connects to events on the ground, the sequence of action in my view would look like: stabilize, protect, build, and transition. Over the next few years it might look like the following. 2009 would be the stabilize phase, which essentially is a holding operation focused on setting conditions for a successful Afghan election this year. The Afghan election of 2009, the presidential election, is the strategic report card of the entire enterprise of Afghanistan and it's occurring this year. That has to be the focus of our security efforts for 2009.

For 2010, the protect phase, which will begin this year as well, to allow us to regain the initiative from the enemy in a counteroffensive against his very aggressive, violent attacks, particularly across the southern half of the country. This protect phase would focus on building additional security for the population, growing state institutions, while persuading and enabling the Afghan government to be more effective at the local level. Again, this will often be led by our military units partnered with civilian limited capacity, especially in the violent areas.

The build phase and consolidation would be 2010 to 2015, again focused on protecting the population, building the state and nonstate institutions. Improved security would have to be built from the bottom up in Afghanistan in this phase and allow the concurrent growth of economic and governance institutions.

Then finally, the transition phase, which is 2015 to 2025, would see the movement to Afghan control. Some of that would occur in the previous phase, especially in the north, where we have a much more secure environment. This transition phase would allow us to return full Afghan control across the country as security has improved, the civil-led effort now is in front of the military effort, and that the growth of Afghan institutions and economic capability has taken root.

Across this entire period of time, we have a what I would call prevent phase, which is counter-sanctuary operations to disrupt the enemy and ensure that we keep him off balance. But we have to do that in a very careful, balanced way to ensure it doesn't unhinge the rest of our operations. That can be a problem that we see in the newspaper headlines today.

Finally, a few brief words on Pakistan. Pakistan arguably presents the U.S. with its greatest strategic challenge in the region. It's well known that Pakistan's the second largest Islamic country in the world, armed with several dozen nuclear weapons. That said, the conflict in Afghanistan is not simply a subset of a broader challenge in Pakistan. Solving Pakistan will not in and of itself solve

Afghanistan. Pakistan requires its own strategy and its own solutions in a regional context as the U.S. looks at our requirements.

We must assist Pakistan in managing change inside of Pakistan, led by the Pakistanis, economically, militarily, perhaps even societally. But these immense combination of factors are going to be very difficult to overcome.

Essential to our long-term prospects with Pakistan is building a strategic partnership with Pakistan that takes us beyond today's what I call use and abuse relationship, the continual give and take of how we can get more from the Pakistanis and how they can get more from us. We have to have a vision of a long-term relationship there that allows them to believe in the sustained presence and the sustained involvement of the United States in the region. Their lack of that belief today undercuts all of our efforts.

So in conclusion, I would argue that the war in Afghanistan can be won, but only by the concentrated application of strong U.S. leadership beginning here in Washington, a new unified civil-military strategy which must be implemented from the bottom up on the ground, and the right resources to enable a new set of dynamic leaders to fully implement this new plan.

We must clearly acknowledge that only the U.S. can be the engine that powers this train and it's the only nation that can lead this renewed international effort.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of General Barno follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, General.

Ambassador Dobbins.

STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES DOBBINS, DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE POLICY CENTER, RAND CORPORATION

Ambassador Dobbins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Well, the question before us is whether it's possible for the United States to turn around the situation in Afghanistan as we successfully did in Iraq in 2007 and 2008. I think there are reasons to be cautious in answering that question. Afghanistan is, after all, larger and more populous than Iraq, while American, allied, and Afghan forces are much smaller than those that we had in Iraq. Afghanistan's more isolated and inaccessible. It's far poorer and less developed. And it's been at civil war for 30 years.

Yet we still have several advantages in Afghanistan that we lacked in Iraq, given the nature of our entry. First of all, the American presence in Afghanistan remains more popular than it has ever been in Iraq. Second, Karzai retains more popularity than any leader in Iraq has yet been able to secure. Thirdly, we have far more international support for our efforts in Afghanistan than we ever did in Iraq. Fourthly, all of Afghanistan's neighbors and near neighbors, with the partial exception of Pakistan, helped to form the Karzai government and fully accept its legitimacy and wish to see it succeed. Finally, sectarian animosities in Afghanistan are less intense than Iraq.

These conditions are changing, however, and they're changing for the most part for the worst. Afghans are becoming increasingly critical of our presence. President Karzai is losing domestic and

international support. Violence is increasing. Civilian casualties are climbing, threatening to generate new refugee flows and exacerbate tensions among these ethnic groups. Thus the shift in attention, American attention and international attention, from Iraq to Afghanistan has come none too soon.

I'd like to use my remaining time to suggest a number of additional steps that could be taken to improve our prospects for succeeding in Iraq. By succeeding, I mean succeeding in turning around the negative security trends.

Chairman LEVIN. Succeeding in Afghanistan?

Ambassador Dobbins: Excuse me, succeeding in Afghanistan, and by that I mean turning around the negative security trends.

First, I think we need to unify the NATO and American military command chain. At the moment we have a division of forces in Afghanistan. Most of the forces in Afghanistan do not come under General Petraeus and CENTCOM. Most of them come under the Supreme Allied Commander, whose headquarters is in Belgium, another American general, General Craddock. The division in command goes down into the country as well, with the Operation Enduring Freedom and ISAF running two completely separate command chains.

Clearly we can continue to muddle through with this divided command structure, as we have for years. But I think if there's any chance of Holbrooke and Petraeus pulling off in Afghanistan what Petraeus and Crocker were able to pull off in Iraq, that's only going to happen if Petraeus is given full control over the military half of that relationship. At the moment he controls less than 50 percent of the forces in Iraq.

I think there's a fairly easy way of doing that—

Chairman LEVIN. In Afghanistan?

Ambassador Dobbins: In Afghanistan, pardon me.

Chairman LEVIN. I'm just doing that because there's a record being kept.

Ambassador Dobbins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. I think we all know what you mean, but that's the only reason for the interruptions.

Ambassador Dobbins: I think there's a fairly simple way of doing that, although it would require a political decision, and that is to make General Petraeus a major NATO commander. At present there are two major NATO commands, one in Mons, Belgium, Supreme Allied Command-Europe, and a second one in Norfolk, which is doing transformation. Now, transformation is yesterday's priority. It may be tomorrow's priority as well. But it's not today's. Today's is winning the war in Afghanistan, and therefore I would take all those NATO staffers from Norfolk and move them down to Tampa and create a major NATO command so that Petraeus would have responsibility to the American President for the American part of this operation and responsibility to the NATO Council for the NATO part of this operation, and run that part of the operation through an integrated military command structure. I think this is the only way that we can unite the effort successfully.

I'd point out that since we invaded, along with the U.K., North Africa in 1942, that's the system we have used in all of our joint endeavors with the Europeans—the Cold War, Bosnia, Kosovo. Af-

ghanistan is the first time where we've had divided command structures in NATO and allied operations.

Second, in my written testimony I offered a couple of suggestions about how we can improve and unify the command of the civilian assets, that is to say improve the relationship between the United States and its allies and provide more coherent leadership, for instance, to the provincial reconstruction team effort, which at the moment is completely—is completely unstructured. 22 PRTs, the majority of them are in fact run not by the United States, but by allies. Each ally runs its own on their own standards and there is no practical oversight or commonality among the approaches of the civilian part of this counterinsurgency effort.

Thirdly, I think that we need to bolster the quality and size, not only of the troop presence and for that matter the civilian presence in Afghanistan, but the quality of the staff that both our ambassador and our military commander there have. One of the reasons that Crocker and Petraeus were successful in Iraq was that they had large, sophisticated staffs that were attuned to the local situation and could conduct a very difficult and complex counterinsurgency operation successfully. I don't think we've put that richness of resources into Afghanistan yet. Crocker, for instance, had half a dozen ambassadors working for him in subordinate positions, and Petraeus had a very large staff, including a number of civilians who brought expertise that the military don't normally bring to a situation. So we need to bolster that aspect of the effort as well.

Fourth, as General Barno suggested, we need to combine our top-down approach in Afghanistan of building up the Afghan army and the Afghan government with a bottom-up approach, something similar, under admittedly quite different circumstances, to the Sons of Iraq effort that we instituted in Iraq. I've got some suggestions for that. I do think that in Iraq we essentially took 100,000 insurgents and put them on our payroll, and thereby turned around the security situation dramatically in the Sunni parts of the country. Exactly how we replicate that in Iraq and Afghanistan is going to depend on very different circumstances, but it does imply a willingness to talk to the least some of the Taliban and to accommodate at least some of their—at least some of their aspirations.

Fifth, I think we need to pay more attention to insurgent activities in the Pakistani province of Baluchistan. So far all of our economic assistance and all of our Predator strikes have come into the Northwest Frontier Province, which is not odd since that's where Al Qaeda tends to operate and it's also where the insurgent groups that were operating against American forces in the northern part of the country and eastern part of the country were located. However, that's not where the Taliban is headquartered. That's not where the Taliban is operating from. It's operating from Baluchistan. Its main council meets in Quetta. So I think we need to complement the attention that we've been paying to Northwest Frontier Province with a comparable level attention to the situation in Baluchistan.

Sixth, I think we need to support the upcoming Afghan elections while remaining scrupulously neutral among the possible candidates. Now, that sounds like a no-brainer and not too hard to do,

but it'll in fact be very difficult. It will in practice limit the ability we have to criticize Karzai. The criticisms of Karzai and his government are largely legitimate. It has been penetrated by corruption, Karzai is sometimes indecisive. But we need to avoid the appearance that we're trying to undermine that government or favor alternative candidates. So that's going to be a very difficult balance to maintain over the next year.

Seventh and lastly, we need to intensify our engagement with Afghanistan's neighbors. Now, I think we all agree that that includes most particularly Pakistan, which is the least helpful of the neighbors at the present. But it also means engaging Iran, which could be quite—which has by and large been benign on Afghanistan, but could be considerably more helpful, and continuing to work with Russia and India. All of these countries were our partners back in 2001 after the 9–11 strike in overthrowing the Taliban and replacing it with a broadly based government, and we need to reconstitute that consensus.

Let me conclude by saying a word about what our objectives should be in Afghanistan. I'm often asked, do we seek a secular democracy, a more developed economy, a strong centralized government, a fully self-sufficient state capable of securing its territory and populace? If so, how realistic are these aims and how long would they take? This it seems to me are not questions that we can or should try to answer definitively at this point. Democratization, development, capacity-building and diplomacy, fighting the insurgents, and negotiating with those that can be won over should all be viewed not as independent goals, but as components of an overall counterinsurgency strategy, the objective of which is to secure the population.

Our job is neither to defeat the Taliban nor to determine the future shape of Afghan society. The American and allied objective should be to reverse the current negative security trends and ensure that fewer innocent Afghans are killed next year than this year. In a counterinsurgency campaign, this is the difference between winning and losing: Are you successfully protecting the population or not? If as a result of our efforts the current rise of violence is reversed in the population made more secure, the Afghan people will be able to determine their own future through peaceful rather than violent competition of ideas, people, and political factions. This has begun to happen in Iraq and our objective should be to give the Afghans the same opportunity.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Dobbins follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Ambassador, very much.

Dr. Strmecki.

STATEMENT OF MARIN J. STRMECKI, PH.D., SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT AND DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS, SMITH RICHARDSON FOUNDATION

Dr. Strmecki: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to share my views with the Committee about the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan and to address your questions.

The debate about the Obama Administration's policy toward the region has really focused on the wisdom of sending the additional 17,000 troops to Afghanistan. My view is that the situation in Af-

ghanistan had deteriorated to the point that more troops were necessary. However, just as important as sending more forces is the question of what other conditions are necessary to ensure when these forces are sent they can move us toward our objective. I would like to touch on a handful of those conditions.

The first involves the role of Pakistan. A first order priority for the Obama Administration must be to undertake a clear-eyed assessment about whether the Pakistani military establishment is doing all that it can to eliminate the sanctuaries on its territory. If it is not doing so—and I do not believe it is—then the task for American diplomacy must be to find a way to address the motivations that are driving Pakistani policies—their geopolitical motivations, their fears, their interests—so that one can move them to a position where they make a strategic choice to fully exert themselves against the problem in the sanctuaries.

Second, the United States, other NATO countries, and the Afghan government must develop a campaign plan based on classic counterinsurgency principles. We should place central priority on creating security for the Afghan population. This means above all creating persistent presence for security forces, primarily Afghan forces, at the local level, to give the people the confidence that they can share intelligence with us about the enemy without fear of retaliation when our forces are not there.

Third, to support this counterinsurgency campaign, the United States should work with the Afghan government to dramatically escalate the size and capabilities of Afghan national security forces. This probably means building an Afghan National Army to 250,000 troops and an Afghan National Police Force of more than 100,000 personnel. This will be expensive, but it is still the most cost-effective way to secure Afghanistan because deploying an international soldier costs 50 to 100 times more than deploying an Afghan soldier.

Fourth, the United States should work with those Afghans who are seeking to improve governance in their country, reducing corruption and strengthening the civil administration. We are right to be critical of the Karzai government in this regard. It has underperformed. But we shouldn't lose hope because there have been achievements—the building of the Afghan National Army, promoting rural development and health through Afghan-led national programs, starting the process of appointing better officials to provincial and local levels, and appointing a reform-oriented minister of interior. We can be critical of the Afghans, but we should build on the progress that we are starting to see.

Fifth, the United States and other supporters of Afghanistan must work with its government to bring into balance the military and nonmilitary elements of the strategy. There's a tried and true formula that proper counterinsurgency is 80 percent non-military and 20 percent military. But our efforts, if one looks at budgets and resources and personnel, are the converse.

We need to find ways to build on effective Afghan-led development programs, as well as to create enterprise funds and other mechanisms to stimulate growth.

I'd like to make one final point. In the public debate there have been calls from many circles to define downward our goals in Af-

ghanistan, to abandon the objective of building a stable, effective, and democratic state that would be our ally in the war on terror, and instead to focus simply on the narrow and primarily military objective of preventing Afghan territory from becoming a safe haven for terrorists. Defining our goal downward in this respect would be a terrible mistake. It might be possible or even advisable if the threat in the region had disappeared or was diminishing. But it's a proximate threat and it's a growing threat and located in western Pakistan. It's a threat to us, it's a threat to Afghanistan, it's a threat to stability in Pakistan. We need to work against that problem from the western in Afghanistan, from the east in Pakistan, and in working to the heart of the problem in the border regions.

Afghanistan looks like a very difficult task and it certainly is. But if the Obama Administration makes the big decisions early I believe it has the ability to turn the situation around in its first term.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Strmecki follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Dr. Strmecki.

Why don't we—let's try a 6-minute first round. I think there's a vote that's going to begin at 10:30. It's my hope we can work right through that vote.

In his recent statement to the Intelligence Committee, Dennis Blair said that ″No improvement in security in Afghanistan is possible without progress in Pakistan and no improvement in Afghanistan is possible without Pakistan taking control of its border areas and improving governance, creating economic and educational opportunities throughout the country.″

As I indicated, it obviously would be very, very helpful if Pakistan was able to improve the border situation and take control of it and do the other things which Dennis Blair talked about.

But would you agree with me that that statement is simply too unqualified, that there can be no improvement in Afghan security unless the situation in Pakistan is improved in the way that's indicated? Why don't we start off with you, Dr. Strmecki. Very quickly, would you agree with that statement that it's too unconditional?

Dr. Strmecki: I would agree with you, Mr. Chairman. I think it's an issue of costs. If one got cooperation of the kind that he discussed in his point, an order of magnitude reduction in cost in terms of stabilizing Afghanistan would I think be possible. But one can harden Afghanistan against the insurgency if one puts in the resources and approaches it mobilizing Afghan capability at the right levels

Chairman LEVIN. Ambassador Dobbins?

Ambassador Dobbins: I agree that it's an overstatement in the sense that I do think it's possible to reverse the currently negative trends. But I don't think it's possible to eliminate the threat or create an entirely self-sustaining Afghan capability of protecting its population unless Pakistan is playing a much more benign role. Afghanistan is simply too poor, too isolated, to ever be able to secure its territory and its population unless its neighbors cooperate in that effort.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

General.

General Barno: I would agree as well, Mr. Chairman. I think in fact as I look at Afghanistan that probably half of the problems that we were dealing with were not related to the Taliban; they were related to internal factors trying to pull the country apart—corruption, crime, poverty, lack of education, lack of health care. Those factors are not directly impacted by activities inside of the tribal areas of Pakistan.

Chairman LEVIN. I think each of you have commented on the additional forces which the President has now indicated are going to be going to Afghanistan, but why don't we have it in one place in the record. Very briefly, do you support the President's decision to send an additional 17,000 troops to Afghanistan over the next 6 months or so? General? Briefly, why? Do you support it and briefly why?

General Barno: I absolutely support it, Mr. Chairman. Having just been out there a month ago, it was clear in Regional Command South, where the bulk of those forces are going, that they are tremendously under-resourced with boots on the ground right now, and if we're going to secure the population we're going to require a much different force structure than what's available there today.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Ambassador?

Ambassador Dobbins: I support the reinforcement and expect that probably more are going to be necessary over the next year.

Chairman LEVIN. And do you want to say briefly why? I know you did in your testimony, but still very quickly tell us, summarize why you think the additional forces are needed and appropriate.

Ambassador Dobbins: I think the core of any successful counterinsurgency strategy is making the populace feel that they're safer if you're there than if you're not and providing them pervasive—or not so much pervasive as persistent security, so that you don't lose control of the villages at night and they come in and murder everybody what cooperated with you in the daytime.

Now, given the dispersed nature of the Afghan population and the size of the Afghan population, there's probably no conceivable American increase that's going to fully meet that. So it is going to have to be met by, as you've suggested, significantly increasing the size of the Afghan forces and contributions from allies. But most particularly, in addition I think we have to empower the local communities in the threatened areas to contribute to their own security and look on the central government's and our own forces as quick reaction forces that can come when they're threatened. Creating that kind of structure for local security I think has to be one of our priorities.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Dr. Strmecki.

Dr. Strmecki: I also support the reinforcement of our forces. One reason, as has been discussed, is that a proper counterinsurgency plan focused on protecting the population will require more people. But also, if we're going to escalate the numbers of Afghan forces, that key mentoring and partnering role will require additional forces.

Chairman LEVIN. I'd like to ask you about the border issue. It's obviously a huge problem and we keep saying to Pakistan: We need you to control your border. Down in the Baluchistan area, what that's going to mean is basically taking on the forces there that so far they've been unwilling to take on, including the Taliban leaders that are there, that openly—or if not openly, at least have meetings in Quetta and support forces going across that border into Afghanistan.

What I have argued is that the strongest security force in Afghanistan is their army and it is a weak force that is now along the border, where they rely on the border police to do the patrolling and the controlling, and yet there has been a history of corruption there and weakness.

I'm wondering whether or not you—could you comment on my suggestion that the strongest Afghan security force should at least in part be moved to that border to provide a deterrent for those cross-border incursions and that we should not rely as heavily on Pakistan to stop those incursions from occurring?

Why don't we go right to left. Dr. Strmecki?

Dr. Strmecki: I think keeping some kind of screens, whether it's our forces together with Afghan National Army forces or Afghan National Army forces alone, is important.

it has to be complemented by the population security campaign. It needs to be in balance. But the screen would be helpful, and certainly the Afghan National Army forces are the most effective ones on the Afghan side.

I think the real pay dirt in terms of Pakistan and getting Pakistan on side in this effort is going to be diplomatic. If Ambassador Holbrooke can get to the root of why Pakistan is conducting itself the way it is—is it fear of India getting too much influence in Afghanistan? Is it fear that we're going to leave and there will be a proxy competition afterward, and so forth. There are other motivations that may be behind the Pakistani conduct. If we can get to those and find ways to address them that do not compromise our interests in Afghanistan, but allay fears or take interests into account on the Pakistani side, I think you could see a flip in the Pakistani policy.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Ambassador Dobbins?

Ambassador Dobbins: I'll defer to General Barno on the feasibility of controlling that long, difficult border. I'm skeptical that it would be the optimal use of available and limited forces.

I do agree with Marin that part of the solution is diplomatic. We're in this odd situation and the Afghans are in this odd situation of insisting that Pakistan control a border that Afghanistan doesn't recognize. The border between Afghanistan and Pakistan is contested and it's contested because the Afghans don't recognize it and, frankly, many of them harbor aspirations to taking over large parts of Pakistan, the parts that are currently inhabited by Pashtuns.

I think at some stage we might want to try to reconstitute the kind of meeting we had in Bonn in 2001 which set up the Karzai government, this one to try to negotiate a pact among Afghanistan, its neighbors, and near neighbors, the components of which might

include all of the parties declaring Afghanistan to be permanently neutral, Afghanistan agreeing not to permit its territory to be used against the interests of other neighbors, its neighbors agreeing not to allow their territory to be used against Afghanistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan finally recognizing their common border, all of the parties guaranteeing that border, and the United States and its NATO allies agreeing that they will eventually withdraw once all of these other provisions have been fulfilled.

So I do think this is not something you can do overnight, but I think that kind of objective for Holbrooke's diplomacy would be worth considering.

Chairman LEVIN. Very quickly, General, because my time is up.

General Barno: I would be very cautious about moving forces to the border. It's a 1,500 mile border, the

distance from Washington, D.C., to Denver, Colorado.

Chairman LEVIN. I'm talking Baluchistan mainly here.

General Barno: Well, even on the Baluchistan side, Mr. Chairman, I think that the ability to actually try and shut down border crossings because of the size and the complexity and the terrain there and the history of that being a very porous area is going to be very tough. I think there's more that can be done, but I would be against moving military forces there to do that. I don't think that would be productive.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Senator McCain.

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I thank the witnesses. General McKiernan has said that 17,000 additional are at best two-thirds of what his requirement would be. Would you agree, pending, obviously, the development and implementation of an overall strategy? General?

General Barno: I think he best knows what his requirement is, Senator. So clearly he understands what he's trying to achieve with those forces, which is the ultimate question, what are the forces going there to implement on the ground and is that the right number to implement the strategy which we all now think is the correct strategy. So we have a couple questions we have to know the answer to before we can say this is the right resources to apply.

Senator MCCAIN. But very likely it's not sufficient?

General Barno: I think from my own brief visit out here recently, I think that, depending on how the strategy lies out, that the total security force requirement could be substantially more than that, and that'll include lots of Afghan forces as well.

Senator MCCAIN. Ambassador?

Ambassador Dobbins: I agree with that.

Senator MCCAIN. Doctor.

Dr. Strmecki: I agree as well.

Senator MCCAIN. Are we in danger in our exhaustion and frustration and weariness of developing a counterterrorism strategy in Afghanistan, as opposed to a counterinsurgency strategy, General?

General Barno: I've always viewed the counterterrorism component, which I should shorthand as calling strike operations, as a subset of a broader counterinsurgency strategy.

Senator MCCAIN. They alone didn't work in Iraq.

General Barno: No, they can't work by themselves. It's simply a way of buying time. In some ways, as I watched while I was out there, some of those strikes obviously counter our strategic objectives. They may be tactical successes by killing the individuals we're looking for, but when they kill civilians the strategic impact is—

Senator MCCAIN. It alienates both Afghan and Pakistani populations?

General Barno: I think clearly in Afghanistan we have options to operate with our ground forces in ways that we don't across the border. So our choices are much more limited inside of Pakistan, which requires us to work closely with the Pakistanis. In Afghanistan we have a lot more—a series of different things we can do than simply conduct strikes from the air, which we're doing some of there as well.

Ambassador Dobbins: I generally agree. I've stressed that the objective, our objective there, has to be not defeating the Taliban or even killing terrorists; it's reducing the number of civilian casualties. If we do that we're winning, and if we're winning then many things will become possible that are not possible when you're losing, which is what we're doing at the moment.

Dr. Strmecki: I'm very concerned in terms of what we see in Special Operations Forces raids and air strikes that are not linked to a population security campaign. I think they are alienating—

Senator MCCAIN. That partially can be addressed by integration of command.

Dr. Strmecki: That's right, that's right. But on the Afghan side they're seeing civilian casualties from these things, but no returns in terms of increasing security. So I think that is why you're seeing trends in the Afghan population that they're losing confidence in us to be able to deliver the result of security.

Senator MCCAIN. General, I think—I assume you agree that in 2003 and 2005 we were going in the right direction, since you were there.

General Barno: That's a loaded question, I think, Senator. But I think we had a good—

Senator MCCAIN. Without personalizing it, what happened? What caused what was really a promising situation to deteriorate to a now almost universal opinion that we are not winning, therefore we are losing?

General Barno: One of the things we've done in Afghanistan, and it still is in play today, is a continuous rotation of people. Ambassador Khalilzad and I got there within a few weeks of each other in the fall of 2003 and because of basically our personnel system we rotated out within a few weeks of each other 19 months later. Since 2001 in Afghanistan we've had six different U.S. military commanders, seven different NATO ISAF commanders, six different chiefs of our embassy, and four different United Nations senior representatives, all in the space of less than 8–1/2 years.

That's probably not a recipe for sustaining a good program and I think that was a big contributor.

Ambassador Dobbins: I think that what Ambassador Khalilzad and General Barno did was abandon the counterterrorism strategy, moved to a more sophisticated counterinsurgency model, began to

provide more resources, both military and civilian. However, that was not enough to turn around the situation. The situation continued to deteriorate through that period. So they were doing the right things, but they were doing it with inadequate resources.

Dr. Strmecki: I'd differ a little bit about the end of the period. If you look at late 2004, early 2005, the security incidents in Afghanistan were almost negligible. The most important thing that I believe happened is that there was an escalation by the enemy starting in mid, late '05, and then dramatically so in early 2006.

I think that the response was no counter-escalation. We essentially went along the glide path that we'd been on, rather than understand the enemy has voted and now we have to respond with a counter-escalation.

At the same time, there was a drift in President Karzai's leadership. The Afghan people had great hope after his election in October 2004 and they were expecting that they'd see a kind of a housecleaning of bad governance. But instead there was drift and maybe marginal improvements here, marginal improvements there, but not the transformation they were expecting.

Senator MCCAIN. Certainly an increase in corruption.

Dr. Strmecki: That's right. And they were calculating: We've run risks for our government, but only if there's a return, that we see improvement. Gradually, in parts of the country that had poor governance you see people becoming indifferent as between the enemy and the government.

Senator MCCAIN. Should the Karzai government talk to the Taliban? General?

General Barno: The Karzai government, even during my time there, was always in low-level dialogue with various Taliban leaders. The advantage that the government and the coalition had then was that we were winning, we were perceived as winning, and there didn't appear to be any future in being in the Taliban. We have the reverse situation today, which makes it I think much more difficult, much more problematic to even enter into any talks.

They think they're winning, the enemy, and therefore they have no incentives to have any discussions at all.

Ambassador Dobbins: The Karzai government is talking to the Taliban in negotiations that are talks that are being sponsored by Saudi Arabia. Karzai's brother, among others, is participating in these talks.

It's not clear how serious these are on either side. I think it's quite possible that Karzai thinks it's simply good presidential politics to show that he's willing to negotiate, that he's a man of peace, and that it's the other side that's unwilling to make concessions. At some point this might become productive. There are indications—

Senator MCCAIN. Dictated by the realities on the battlefield?

Ambassador Dobbins: Partially, and partially by—as you had in Anbar, at some point it's not impossible that the Taliban will decide that they no longer want to ally themselves with Al Qaeda, that they're prepared to cut those ties. There are—some have said that they're ready now. I've heard people who are much more expert than I am say that the Taliban are willing to offer that deal.

I think that would have to be tested. But if the point comes where the Taliban is actually willing to do what the insurgents in Anbar were willing to do, which is turn against the Arabs, Arab extremists in their society, then I think you would need to reevaluate the utility of those talks.

Dr. Strmecki: The Karzai government since 2004 has had a program and it's called Peace Through Strength, that allows Taliban commanders and fighters to come in out of the cold, and a good number of middle and low-level commanders and fighters have done so.

I think of the nature of the enemy as a hard core in terms of the two shuras, the Peshawar Shura and the Quetta Shura, and then soft layers surrounding them, which might be disaffected communities that have seen bad governance or a minority tribe in an area that makes a tactical alliance with the Taliban or people who are terrorists for a day because of a desire for economic compensation. If you do COIN right, counterinsurgency campaign right, you will see the soft layers fall away, until a point that you're just up against the hard core, and that's the point where you'll see whether the hard core is going to fragment and some part of them will be willing to come in out of the cold.

Senator MCCAIN. I thank the witnesses.

Senator Udall.

STATEMENT OF HON. MARK UDALL, U.S. SENATOR FROM COLORADO

Senator UDALL. Thank you, Senator McCain.

Let me also add my voice to those here today in the SASC who appreciate the good work you've all done. The documents you've produced are worthy of further digestion. I look forward to reading them in great detail.

I followed Senator McCain's line of questioning and your answers with great interest when it comes to the Taliban and do they have political aims, how do you negotiate with them, how do you peel away the various factions. It's certainly worth additional effort and attention.

General Barno, If I might I'd like to turn to the question that you did discuss in your remarks. It's this question of caveats and working in the NATO structure. I heard quite a great deal about it a year ago when I was in Afghanistan. I wonder if you might comment on ideas you would have to work effectively within that structure. The panel has talked a great deal, as did the chairman and the ranking member, about this is a test for NATO, this may have historical ramifications if in fact NATO is successful; on the other hand, if we fall short then what does that say about NATO's future?

General Barno: Thank you, Senator. I think caveats remain a problem in Afghanistan and will remain a problem as long as NATO is in Afghanistan. The likelihood of nations dropping their caveats in Afghanistan, regardless of how much pressure, how much persuasion the U.S. does with them, I think is next to zero. I don't think they will grow necessarily, but I also am keenly aware from my visit out there to the south—and I visited the Brits, the Canadians, as well as American forces, the Dutch commander at

Regional Command South—it's very clear that the caveats are linked to the political support at home for these nations, and the political support at home is not moving in a more robust direction. It's definitely fraying at the edges, and in many of the countries, particularly those in the northern part of Afghanistan—the Germans, the Italians, the Spanish—the political will at home in my estimation was only for a peacekeeping operation in the first place. So the idea that somehow those nations would remove their caveats, come to the south, and take up weapons and a counterinsurgency fight I think is highly unlikely.

So to what the chairman noted this morning, I think our line of approach with NATO realistically is going to take us down the road to ask them what we think they can and will provide. That's driven as much by political support as it's driven by military capability.

Senator UDALL. So in effect you're talking about, as we often do, three centers of gravity, the Afghan people being the primary center of gravity, the various military leadership representatives in the country, the sense the military has that the fight is worthwhile, and then the people of those various countries and they're an additional center of gravity, and our diplomacy and our outreach from the administration could play an important role in at least stiffening that support in places like Germany and the Netherlands and the U.K. Is that what I hear you saying?

General Barno: I think that's a fair assessment. I was at the Munich security conference here about 3 weeks ago and it was very clear, listening to the various nations talk about Afghanistan—and most of the participants were in the political elements of the Nations' legislatures and what-not—that they are absolutely on a daily basis having to convince their populations that this mission is still worthwhile. They need our support and our clear reasoning behind that to help them with that, with that argument.

That said, though, I don't anticipate—I'm hopeful, but I'm not optimistic, that we're going to see any substantial change in the support levels from those countries. I am a bit concerned about those that are in the south because they've been taking the brunt of the casualties of all the countries save the United States here over the last 3 years. There's not a lot of relief in sight for them right now.

Senator UDALL. Thank you, General.

Dr. Strmecki, you talk in your analysis about an area I think it's very important to further understand, and that's the Pakistani government and the Pakistani people's motivation and approach to the conflict in Afghanistan. I want to first just commend you for the five insights you've provided us, and I wonder if you would talk a little bit more in depth about working with the Pakistani government. Sometimes in this region of the world what's up is actually down, what seems logical and rational to us is exactly the opposite impression that people in that part of the world have.

But would you talk a bit more about some creative and insightful ways we could work with the Pakistani government to have success in Afghanistan as well as the FATA and the border regions?

Dr. Strmecki: The key is to look at their motivations behind their conduct if one is assuming they're not doing everything that they can. Afghanistan historically has been an area where regional powers have contested for influence. When Afghanistan has been neu-

tral among the governments around it and able to defend itself, then there's been relative stability in the region. But in the last 20 years when that broke down, you had a series of proxy wars, proxy civil wars, where you had a client inside Afghanistan supported by a regional power on the outside. When one was in, the others mobilized a client against it, and so forth.

The Bonn process brought that to a stop for a time. But what you've seen is Pakistan essentially defecting from the Bonn process and allowing its territory to be used as a sanctuary for the kind of forces that are attacking the Afghan government and our forces. If you ask why they're doing that, I'd offer sort of five potential reasons.

The first is that Pakistan, rightly or wrongly, fears that rivals, particularly India, are gaining influence in Afghanistan. So when you talk with Pakistani officials, they talk about Karzai's links to India, they talk about Northern Alliance officials who have been their opponents when they were supporting the Taliban. They will talk about Indian activities in the east, out of consulates and out of road-building companies. So there is either a paranoia or a belief that they're seeing something and they're reacting.

The second belief is that they don't believe that NATO and the United States have the staying power and therefore it is in their interest to be ready for the proxy competition that would follow.

A third reason—

Senator UDALL. Dr. Strmecki, if I could interrupt you, and I apologize. I understand my time has expired. I did want to thank again the panel for your great insights and important insights, and I'll yield back the time I don't have remaining to the chairman. Thank you again.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Udall. Like all the other questions which we might have to interrupt for various purposes, it would be good if you could complete your answer for the record. I know Senator Udall also would appreciate that.

Senator Nelson.

Senator BEN NELSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman—

Chairman LEVIN. Excuse me for interrupting you.

We will make that answer of yours, the complete answer, in the record at the time that you were making the answer, so we'll have it in the right place. Thank you.

Senator Nelson.

Senator BEN NELSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Each of you has suggested that there are conditions, there are points that we ought to insist on in terms of our capabilities, and to determine whether or not there's the support that we need both internally and externally to continue the challenge in Afghanistan.

When we were faced in Iraq with the questions about how are we doing in Iraq, there were people looking at the same set of facts, one group saying we're winning, another group saying we're losing. It seemed to me and I pushed for benchmarks as a way of getting some metric to measure progress, to move away from talking about whether we're winning or losing, to look more toward whether we're making progress in certain areas.

Do you think it would be appropriate for us to codify, without law but codify, strategy with conditions or benchmarks and then at

various points along the way measure how we are doing in achieving those benchmarks, how the Afghan government is achieving the benchmarks, so that the American people can look at the mosaic and begin to understand what the picture is, because I think for most folks today, including those of us in Congress, it's a muddle. We know we're not doing very well. It's going sideways, it's not achieving the objectives that we had hoped to achieve. But I don't think people know what the objectives are ultimately, other than to beat the Taliban.

So I guess each of you I would ask that question: Do you think that we can or that we should and can we establish benchmarks, conditions, or something where we can measure progress? Let's start with you, General.

General Barno: I think there's some merit in that, Senator. I think it proved to be fairly useful in Iraq, as you noted, much to everyone's surprise. In fact the benchmarks, I think, if I remember correctly, all but one are now—

Senator BEN NELSON. We were opposed when we tried to come up with the idea as it wouldn't work. But I think it did work.

General Barno: I think, and that alone gives it some merit for consideration in Afghanistan. But lack of information about a lot of the overall effort in Afghanistan is rather striking in comparison to Iraq. Tony Cordesman at CSIS has noted how little information statistically is available in any dimension of this. So there may be some utility in that idea. I don't think that's a bad thought.

Senator BEN NELSON. Ambassador?

Ambassador Dobbins: I'm a little skeptical. I have to say that I tended to regard our effort to benchmark the Iraqis back in 2007 more as an effort to transfer responsibility for failure from us to them. Now, they did finally meet the benchmarks, but they met the benchmarks only after we established security conditions which allowed them to move from a survival mode to a more normal political wheeling and dealing mode.

Senator BEN NELSON. Well, and I think we would hope that that would be the case here as well, where our security and their security works to help them from the top down and the bottom up to match, so that they will be secure and they will think the future is brighter for them.

Ambassador Dobbins: I'm not completely hostile to the idea, but I do think that the key benchmark is the one I've suggested, which is how many Afghans are getting killed. If the number's going up you're losing. If the number's going down you're winning. It's as simple as that.

For the first 3 years in Iraq, our military refused to count civilian casualties. They were under orders not to count civilian casualties. Whenever they were asked how many civilians were getting killed, they said they didn't know and they were telling the truth because they weren't counting them.

When Petraeus came back and testified to Congress, his only criteria for success that he presented was that less Iraqis were getting killed this year than last year, and he was right. That was the right metric. So I think it's fine to keep track of what they're doing in other sectors as a way of benchmarking our own progress, but that's the metric that I would put front and center.

Senator BEN NELSON. Dr. Strmecki.

Dr. Strmecki: I think a set of benchmarks would be very productive as long as they are benchmarks about partnership with the Afghan government. I think that's where you're coming from. A properly structured counterinsurgency campaign would give forth very obvious benchmarks: ambient security in district after district after district. The information for that exists because there are sufficient forces to know what the situation is province by province, district by district.

There can be an assessment of the quality of the local governance. When you go to PRTs, they know whether this district administrator is good, this one's bad. The UN knows that. There's a lot of ways we could pool information and then constructively say, here, this province is the one we have to work on because the governance is lacking. Then also some basic measures of economic activity could be undertaken.

One of the great things about the Bonn process is that it had milestones, constitutions, loya jirgas, and so forth, and it was an organizing principle and a kind of a forced march for Afghan, UN, the U.S. efforts. So I think that properly designed benchmarks can create common and shared expectations for a productive partnership with the Afghans.

Senator BEN NELSON. Thank you.

I'll yield back my time. Thank you, gentlemen.

Chairman LEVIN. Senator Bayh.

Senator BAYH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, thank you for your time today. It's a very important hearing and you've been very enlightening in your comments.

I'd like to start with a couple of comments based upon some of the things you've said. Mr. Barno, I think you indicated that the Taliban largely come and go unimpeded by the Pakistani border police. This is an amazing state of affairs. I mean, based upon published reports, when some U.S. forces strayed across the line in pursuit of militants they were fired on by the Pakistani authorities. So we have a situation where our allies are not impeding our adversaries, but firing on us. I mean, how can this be?

Second, we pay them billions of dollars every year in a variety of forms of assistance and as best I can tell we get in return, once again according to published reports, the ability to perhaps launch a few Predator strikes in the tribal areas and to have supplies go through their territory to help with the situation in Afghanistan, a conflict which through their behavior they help to perpetuate. That seems to be a relatively low return on our investment and it's a problematic relationship. I think we need to have a very hardheaded reassessment of our relationship with Pakistan. It's a complex one, I understand, but one we need to focus on. So that's just some frustration I feel, given their behavior that has been less than helpful in some pretty important respects.

Now my questions. Dr. Strmecki, to you first. I think you've put your finger right on it with regard to Pakistan. Until their government—and I'll just append that by saying the military and their intelligence services—make a strategic decision that a more robust effort to combat militancy and the insurgency based in their territories is in their interest, in their strategic interest, it's unlikely to

get much better. They'll do some things on the margins to placate us, but they won't really do all that they can do or as effectively as they should do until they change their calculus about that effort being in their regard. I think that's primarily their standing with the Pakistani people.

What can we do to convince them that it's in their strategic interest to do that?

Dr. Strmecki: I think there are some things that they fear and some things that they could benefit from. I've talked about their fear of regional rivals getting a foothold in Afghanistan and that could be dealt with by what Ambassador Dobbins spoke about in terms of—

Senator BAYH. You mean the Indians?

Dr. Strmecki: That's right.

Some red lines, red lines that are monitored, and that there's a forum in which to discuss and clarify whether bad behavior is taking place by any party.

But one should also be looking to find win-win kind of situations. The Pakistanis would like to project influence, economic and political, into Central Asia. We could help jointly plan and finance the infrastructure to create the roads, rails, telecommunications, other kind of infrastructure that connect Central Asia to Pakistan and world ports through Afghanistan, to privilege that route.

Senator BAYH. So we help allay their fears vis a vis encirclement by India and help foster or abide their ambitions in Central Asia?

Dr. Strmecki: That's right, in the sense of giving a peaceful way to achieve them. And because—

Senator BAYH. That in your view would be enough? I mean, part of their fear of India doesn't seem to be—well, there's a long history there, but it tends to be somewhat irrational from time to time.

Dr. Strmecki: It will be a mediation and it won't be one moment in time when they'll flip. You'll have to work through the problems, look at every issue that they raise, and they have a laundry list, and either allay them by proving that they're not true or, if there are issues, then work it back with the Afghan side.

Senator BAYH. It's worth a shot. It may take some time, as you say, but better than the current state of affairs. Thank you.

General, a couple questions for you. The time line once again you laid out for the transition phase, was that 2015 to 2025 or 2020 to 2025?

General Barno: The time line would have started for transition in my phase here from 2015 to 2025. Some of that actually begins—

Senator BAYH. Transitioning over, starting in 6 years, going possibly as long as 16 years.

General Barno: That would be for primarily the south. In the north we would start transition—could start next year in the north.

Senator BAYH. This is a long time. I mean, 6 to 16 years. A lot of blood and treasure. We have other national security challenges, as you know. Is there anything we can do to expedite that process? The key is upgrading the capabilities of the Afghanis to control their own territory. We consistently overestimated our ability to do that in Iraq. What can we do to expedite that process realistically in Afghanistan?

General Barno: I spent a half day with our embedded training teams that work with the Afghan army in Kandahar and I have since met with their commander, who is back in the States, and they all tell me that they can accelerate—in their view, that the Afghan National Army could be built up much more rapidly, but the long pole in the tent, the thing that will prevent that from happening, is not enough Afghan troops, it's lack of equipment to give these troops machine guns, vehicles, various radio systems—the basics that ultimately will come from the United States in most cases. That's preventing them in their view from being able to grow the force at the rate they think that the Afghans are capable of growing it.

Senator BAYH. So that's the major stumbling block, a lack of—

General Barno: In the view of the people out there on the ground. And it's a problem with them today even with their current forces.

Senator BAYH. Well, we certainly ought to be able to provide that in something less than 6 to 16 years.

General Barno: We should, but our system in that arena is still very much of a constipated peacetime system. It was a problem when I was in Afghanistan in '03 to '05 and it's not a problem that's gotten any better since then, candidly.

Senator BAYH. Mr. Chairman, that is certainly something we ought to be in a position to expedite. If that truly is holding up the transition phase, which ultimately is the answer to this—well, we need to do better than that.

My final question, I think, General—Ambassador, I hope you won't feel neglected—has to do with you once again. Or, Ambassador, feel free to jump in if you would like. The Pakistanis seem to have a different view of these published reports about the Predator strikes. They seem to think that it's having the effect of destabilizing the rest of Pakistan. Published reports indicate that our intelligence people feel that it's having a very salutary effect in terms of keeping Al Qaeda destabilized, on the run, removing key operatives, etcetera, etcetera.

How do we reconcile those two different opinions of these published reports about those kinds of activities?

General Barno: It's a difficult question, especially in an open forum. I think I would—I've been to Pakistan about two dozen times and I see Pakistanis every week here in Washington typically. Their overriding concern that I think animates all of their decision-making is two: fear of India, as Marin noted; and fear of the day the United States leaves. They're expecting that to occur, and that creates a calculus inside their government that takes them in places we don't want them to go.

With regard to these strikes, I think they are having an effect on the enemy and I think they are the only serious pressure that the enemy is worried about every single day in that part of the world. So I think that that is the reason why the United States, to include the new administration, has continued our approach over there in this regard, as best we can tell from reading the newspaper.

The Pakistanis have a different view in the sense that some of that has to be driven by their internal politics of how they react

to this inside their own country, how that plays in their own press. I think we have to take that into account.

Senator BAYH. My time has expired. But it gets back to my initial question to the doctor, which is how do we convince them that it's in their strategic interests to step up and do a better job of dealing with this. That won't be easy and it involves dealing with the India issue, but it's something we've got to get on with here if it's going to be good for Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, and the entire region, and ultimately obviously for us.

Thank you, chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Bayh.

In terms of the long pole in the tent issue being radios and trucks, this is something we have not heard before. We've been told consistently it's lack of trainers; plenty of recruits to speed up the size of the army. In any event, what we will do, Senator Bayh, is we will ask Senator—I mean—General Petraeus if that is in fact the long pole. That is something we can correct, should be able to correct, very, very quickly.

As my staff pointed out, that would be good news if that's the long pole in the tent. But thank you for that testimony. We will take up that line of inquiry.

I owe not only Senator Sessions an apology because he should have been next, but will make up for that. If another Republican comes before you, Senator Hagan, we're going to have to go twice to my left.

Senator Sessions.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for a very good panel and the leadership you provide to this Committee.

I want to share the concerns I think expressed by Senator Bayh. With regard to Pakistan, perhaps I'm in error, but I've been somewhat more understanding of their difficulties than some have been who've been quick to criticize them. Is it not true—maybe, Ambassador, I'll ask you briefly—that a lot of these areas, tribal areas, have never been controlled by the central government? Some of them contain terrorist type violent people who, if energized, could indeed threaten the stability of the Pakistan government if they undertake an aggressive action. Can we be somewhat understanding of their reluctance to undertake some of these activities that we'd like them to undertake?

Ambassador Dobbins: The federally Administered Tribal Areas are a historic artifact of the British Empire. They have never been governed. They in fact formally don't come under Pakistani law. They come under tribal regulations that were imposed by the British and remain in effect today. They're not, for instance, allowed to participate fully in the Pakistani elections or democratic process. In general, the areas, these border areas, are the worst served in Pakistan. They not only have the worst security, they have the worst schools, the worst electricity, the worst roads, the worst clinics.

A counterinsurgency or nation-building effort, whatever you want to call it, in these regions will consist not just of projecting security into those regions, but projecting all those other services into them. And Pakistan isn't going to take money from the Punjab and put

it into those regions after 100 years of neglect. So it's going to take a fairly substantial international effort to empower the Pakistanis and encourage them to begin to integrate those areas in their national—in their national society, and that's not going to be easy.

Now, I do think that Senator Lugar, Senator Biden, and now Senator Kerry and Senator Lugar have introduced an approach to assistance to Pakistan that's designed to incentivize them and provide them long-term resources for that kind of effort, and I think that's probably the right way to go.

Senator SESSIONS. Seeking areas of mutual interest, as Senator Bayh said, seems to me to be the way we need to work it. But it's difficult to ask a sovereign nation to do something in our interest if they don't think it's in their interest. It's just a difficult situation.

I also am concerned, General Barno, when we're talking about 2025. This is a major decision for the Congress. It may be that—and I'm sure that most of us have known we're coming to a point where we're going to have to make such a decision as this. But I want to be convinced. I'm prepared to be supportive of this effort, but I'm uneasy about it. I'm uneasy about sending another 17,000 troops there. The Ambassador says that's going to be more. Will it be 100,000 18 months from now committed in Afghanistan?

I just see Ralph Peters—I didn't agree with everything in his article, but he leads off 2 days ago in USA Today: ″Instead of concentrating on the critical mission of keeping Islamist terrorists on the defensive, we've mired ourselves by attempting to modernize a society that doesn't want to be and cannot be transformed.″ I won't say it cannot be transformed, but it's not easy to transform this society. We know that.

And we know that Kabul has never controlled in any really effective way the entire area of Afghanistan. So let's just talk about some of these things.

Ambassador, you mentioned that there was some potential in some areas, you thought, to accommodate with the Taliban. Are we trying to—General, I'll ask all of you. Dr. Strmecki, you said it would be a mistake to revise downward our goals. But in this hearing a few weeks ago when Mr. Gates was here, Secretary Gates, I asked him.

He was emphatic: Our first goal is to protect the United States from further attacks, to not allow a base to be set up there. It was pretty clear to me that he's asking some tough questions about how many more goals can we have for this country.

So I guess I would like to ask—General Barno, it seems to me—Senator Levin and I were in Iraq before the surge and I guess twice. A lot of progress got made quickly in Iraq in Al Anbar before the surge really took place, as a result of working with local people disconnected to Baghdad. So are we as a matter of policy in Afghanistan so committed to a central government ideal that we're not prepared to work with regional and city and community militias or people who could maintain order in that area, but not be under the direct control of the central government? And could that help us reduce our military commitment?

There was a lot to that, wasn't it.

General Barno: Let me first qualify my remarks a bit on these dates and these times. The transition phase actually is going to

begin in the north and the west of the country, the transition to Afghan full control, next year in 2010. In the northern half of the country, there's many areas where we could be moving in that direction today. So this is not something that's way over the horizon here.

I think in the southern half of the country this year is going to be a whole year and next year is going to be a regain the initiative year. Then by '11, '12 time frame you're going to have areas there where you can start this transition. So we're not—even though I've got a 2025 marker way out there, there's a lot of this that's going to happen in the next 3 to 5 years.

We actually clearly have to turn the direction in the southern half of the country in the next 2 to 3 years. So I think most of what I'm talking about is going to occur, Senator, inside of a 5-year time frame. Then there's a continuous handoff of capabilities to the Afghans. So it shouldn't be viewed that we have large chunks of time and we don't have any transition until 2015.

Senator SESSIONS. Talking about our goals, is it to have every one of these areas under the direct control of Kabul and we expect them all to salute and send taxes and send representatives up there like we do?

General Barno: They have a decentralized system and they've had that for generations. What we have today is both local control, we have provincial councils, we have representatives from the province and districts back in the parliament in Kabul, and we have a relationship between the center and the states that's still fairly decentralized.

Now, American units work out there at the local level every day, but they work with officials that have—

Senator SESSIONS. Let me just interrupt you. You know what happened in Al Anbar. You're not ignorant about that. We worked with local people. We funded the local people. They ran Al Qaeda out. We funded them and I guess Baghdad didn't know anything about it. Some of them weren't happy. But it worked.

That's what turned it around, was it not?

General Barno: That was the start of some major turn- around in Iraq, I think there's no question.

Senator SESSIONS. Yes, it was.

Ambassador, would you share this idea of whether we ratchet what our goals should be? Don't we need to be real clear about what our goals should be?

Ambassador Dobbins: I tend to think we should focus less on end states and focus more on direction and pace. We're still in Kosovo today. You probably haven't had a hearing on that for 7 years, because the numbers, our numbers, are going down, the place is peaceful, it's off the front pages, things are getting better. They may not be getting better as quickly as we like, but they're getting better.

We stayed 10 years in Bosnia. After the first 2 or 3 years, numbers came down quickly; people were satisfied.

If we can turn the situation around in Afghanistan as we did in Iraq, then how quickly we get out, how long our commitment is for, is going to become much less pressing.

I think you're right and everybody's right to note that you have to be modest about what kind of societal changes you can facilitate in Afghanistan. I think you're also right that we need a bottom-up strategy to complement the top-down strategy. They're not necessarily in conflict, but you need to be doing both simultaneously, as we've done in Iraq and as I think we're going to try to start doing in Afghanistan.

Senator SESSIONS. Doctor, just a brief comment?

Dr. Strmecki: I think there are some promising ways to work at the local level, and even the Afghan government is seeking to do that. There's a new program, the Afghan Public Protection Force, that's seeking to recruit people from the village to protect the village. So I think that is a positive thing.

But there's no reason it can't be linked with the government, which has the support of the people overall. They want it to perform better, but they want this government to succeed. So I'd just hit that one point, and I'd say if you want to prevent a safe haven for terrorists in the long term so that we don't have to be there, we have to have some kind of Afghan state that helps police that.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Sessions.

Senator Hagan.

Senator HAGAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank all the witnesses here for your excellent testimony.

In Afghanistan, I think most of us know that it's probably the largest world producer of opium. I know that the drug trade I would think is being used to fund the Taliban and Al Qaeda. I was wondering if you believe that progress in stabilizing Afghanistan without—that you can stabilize Afghanistan without bringing this production of opium under control, and what can we do to address that issue? If all of you could speak on that. General, you want to go first?

General Barno: I was down in Helmand Province during my visit here in January, clearly the centerpiece of narcotics production in Afghanistan. But on a positive side of the ledger, the number of provinces in Afghanistan and districts that are producing poppy has gone down dramatically. It's more found today in the unsecure areas of the country, where the Taliban have a strong presence, no doubt related to some of the funding advantage the Taliban get from that.

I was heartened to see that there is a plan to begin doing quite a bit more on counternarcotics in southern Afghanistan starting this year. The military has got some additional authorities and has some additional directions working against counternarcotics traffickers and those that are connected to terrorism and the insurgency that they had not had in the past. So it'll be very interesting to watch how that authority gets used this year, but I think that's important.

The Afghan government's made some fairly good progress locally on counternarcotics and it's been done by good leadership by governors out there. Particularly Nangarhar Province comes to mind, where they had a huge poppy problem just a few years ago and last year was declared generally poppy-free. So there are some good things going on out there, but it's going to take a connection of good leadership by the Afghan government at the province level

and I think a much stronger system of attack, not on the farmers, but on the traffickers and the producers who benefit from the crop.

Ambassador Dobbins: There's clearly a connection between narcotics production and security or insecurity, but it seems dominantly to be one in which insecurity creates a framework for poppy production, rather than the reverse. As General Barno has indicated, in those provinces where security is reasonably established, poppy production has largely ceased, and it is now focused on the areas that are contested.

So if you look at the components of a counternarcotics strategy, I think there is a general view among experts that eradication of crops has very limited utility and some counterproductive aspects; aerial eradication probably shouldn't be tried; that interdiction should be strengthened, interdiction of drug traffickers, and particularly of the heroin trade. The actual poppies is a bulk product, but as it's refined down and then shipped out that's the point at which interrupting the stream will hurt the traffickers, but not the farmers. Finally, the ultimate key is alternate development, that is giving them actually alternative sources of livelihood that reasonably compete with what they can make in poppy trafficking.

Dr. Strmecki: I agree with both of those comments and I just add one last point, that in a properly designed counterinsurgency plan, where you're securing district after district in these contested areas where there's a lot of opium production, that's when the ″build″ part of clear, hold, and build needs to include a major agricultural component: bringing in the inputs, agricultural credit, a little technical assistance, and helping product get to market.

Thank you.

Senator HAGAN. Obviously, I think if you can give the farmers something else to grow and actually bring in a little bit of money it would help them in the short term and long term.

I had one other question dealing with Pakistan and that is, we have talked some about the U.S. aid to Pakistan and I was just wondering your comments on whether that should be larger, smaller, more weighted towards economic and social development, and just what your thoughts are on that issue? Dr. Strmecki, you want to start this time?

Dr. Strmecki: I think that if Pakistan moved into a cooperative, a fully cooperative posture vis a vis Afghanistan, we should be prepared to put on the table Egypt-level assistance over the long term to build Pakistan's educational infrastructure, its economy, and to prove that the United States has an interest in Pakistan, not because it's going to help us on the war on terror, but for Pakistan's own sake. But I think it's important that that come only after Pakistan has become fully cooperative in our relationship.

Ambassador Dobbins: I would favor conditioning the military assistance and assistance we give that's used to support the military to ensure that it's used for the purposes that we intend. I do think that we probably should be providing a good deal of assistance in the non- military areas, in education and in other areas, including in trying to provide better government services, better public services to the populations along the border regions.

I don't know that I would necessarily condition that assistance on the performance of the Afghan army.

Senator HAGAN. Pakistan.

General Barno: I do think that sustained robust assistance for Pakistan's going to be very important for us to help maintain stability in that country, and I think part of looking at the internal stability is ensuring the population has an advancing economic capacity and an advancing political representation in the state to do the internal things that we do in many other countries. I think a very limited amount of our aid has gone in that direction in the past. There are some proposals out there clearly to increase that dramatically. I think that would be very helpful in the environment that Pakistan finds itself in today.

Senator HAGAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Hagan.

Senator Reed.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I thank you, gentlemen, for your testimony, but also I've benefited from your thoughtful advice over many years individually and collectively, and thank you for that very, very much.

A lot has been said today about unity of command and I want to just drill down if I could. We have currently in Afghanistan, RC-East is an American operation, 101st. RC- South is a Dutch operation at the moment. I've heard, in fact I think in our discussions, General Barno, an alternate approach might be to bring in another division headquarters, American division headquarters, and essentially have a unity of command across the Pakistan border, with an American division headquarters, multinational units, but at the division level.

Another aspect of this is that our division headquarters are much more robust in terms of the staff, in terms of access to intelligence assets, access to civil- military relations. I think that's the case. If not, please correct me.

But can you comment upon that, changes that we might make on the ground to enhance unity of command and coherence of our strategy?

General Barno: We talked a bit on this before, as you noted, Senator. The American division headquarters is a very, very capable organization and the 101st Airborne in Bagram—

Senator REED. Soon to be replaced by the 82nd.

General Barno:—soon to be replaced by the mighty 82nd Airborne, that's right. Thank you very much, absolutely. I have served in that division before, as have you.

The divisional level in the United States brings a tremendous wealth of capabilities. American units at the brigade level, but beneath the division, are used to plugging into those capabilities. So that's a very important contribution we've got going in the East for us, really a very, very robustly resourced effort.

In the South, I spent a good bit of time with the Regional Command South headquarters. Unlike our American division headquarters, there's only three people in RC- South that I could find that were there for 1-year tours. The remaining—and that was the three most senior people, the two-star commander and his two one-star deputies. Virtually the entire remaining staff are there for 3-month tours, 4-month tours, or 6-month tours.

They're an ad hoc organization that wasn't built on a headquarters corps. So their abilities to work together and to have all the capabilities an American division brings into the fight are simply absent, through no fault of their own. That's just the way that they were organized and the way that they're manned by these various countries.

So I think there'd be a lot of strength in having a full-time, at least 1-year duration divisional headquarters in southern Afghanistan. An American headquarters would bring a tremendous wealth of capabilities. It would also bring the long-term manning and the ability to command a much larger number of American units that are going to be in the south from this point forward.

We've also talked a bit about whether there might be a need to have an interim headquarters in between the four- star headquarters in Kabul that oversees the entire country of Afghanistan and this more robust fight in the southern part of the country in Afghanistan. Today the ISAF headquarters does everything from political-military activities all the way down to tactics. For any organization, that's extraordinarily difficult, to span that breadth of responsibility.

So I think that there's some benefit in thinking about this idea of whether there shouldn't be something like what we have in Iraq, where we've had a four-star headquarters that did the political-military and strategy, but we had a very important three-star headquarters, the Multi-National Corps-Iraq, that did all the tactical fighting and the integration of that whole counterinsurgency. That was a very important part I think of our success in Iraq.

Senator REED. Thank you.

Ambassador Dobbins, I want you to respond to this issue, but in your comments you also talk about at the higher NATO level, a reorganization, moving their headquarters in Virginia down to Tampa. I have a sense too, frankly, in our travels there that NATO is sincerely committed to the operations, but their organizational structure there—the deputy is in Mons and it's remote control more than direct control.

But please go ahead, Mr. Ambassador.

Ambassador Dobbins: I think that's right—

Chairman LEVIN. Is your mike on?

Senator REED. Your microphone has to be on, sir.

Ambassador Dobbins: Our command in Afghanistan is divided below General McKiernan and above General McKiernan. General Barno has focused on the below General McKiernan types of changes, and ideally combining OEF and ISAF would be a step in the right direction. My proposal has been combining the structures above General McKiernan, which I think is independently desirable, whatever you do at the lower.

I think it's also a way—you know, we may not get a lot more troops out of the Europeans, but I think if we could set up a command structure that was optimized for conducting this where that itself would be a signal that they're taking it seriously.

Senator REED. Dr. Strmecki, your comments, since you've been a—

Dr. Strmecki: I agree with General Barno's prescription. I'd just add that it would create a natural point of collaboration of the

three-star headquarters with our embassy to be able to integrate civilian effects into the military plan. But I also think it's important to move toward a full integration of the Afghan side in strategy, operational planning, and execution. They are already the largest force, the Afghan National Army, in the theater, and if we pursue the right policies they will become the dominant force. So having them integrated into the planning is important.

Senator REED. Thank you very much. My time has expired.

Chairman LEVIN. Senator Collins.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

One of the reasons that we are seeing some success in Iraq is not just the addition of more troops, but rather a change in strategy that accompanied the addition of more troops. In that regard, I have a lot of concern about sending more troops to Afghanistan prior to the administration completing its review of what the strategy should be.

Ambassador, I'd like to start with you, to ask you to comment on whether there is a risk of putting 17,000 additional troops into Afghanistan before the new administration has decided what changes in strategy should accompany that insertion of additional troops?

Ambassador Dobbins: Senator, it would obviously be desirable to do the two simultaneously and I'm sure the administration would have preferred to, but felt that the situation was too urgent. I'd say first of all that the Bush Administration in its latter years was already altering the strategy in Afghanistan toward the model that had been established in Iraq, although they hadn't completely embraced it. So some of the changes toward a counterinsurgency strategy as opposed to a counterterrorism strategy were already put in place.

But to execute that kind of strategy, to execute the kind of strategy we did execute in Iraq, you do need more troops. You're going to need the troops to execute a strategy that is centered around protecting the population, and therefore I think sending the troops makes sense.

So I mean, I agree in principle that you're right that it would be desirable to do both at the same time. My sense is that the administration will probably complete its review on Afghanistan and announce the results before most of those troops get there.

Senator COLLINS. General?

General Barno: I would generally agree with the Ambassador's comments. Being out there and seeing what the demands were on the current level of troops in the south and knowing this election is coming up here in August, there is—I think a very practical decision was made, which is we know we have to get more troops in to help set conditions for a successful election; we'll begin that flow and we'll begin putting the logistics and the other requirements in place to ensure that they're capable of being bedded down where we need to put them—in a very austere area, by the way—without having the complete strategy approach finished.

I think it was just a very practical call to make, and knowing that the strategy is in its final stages right now and seeing where that would probably lead them. But I think the election was one of the key drivers on that, a date that's fixed, that's not going to go away, that we're going to need those troops for.

Senator COLLINS. Doctor?

Dr. Strmecki: I would agree with the thrust of your comments, that if you send forces without the right strategy you're not—you're certainly not going to get the optimal result, and you may not get—you can even have a counterproductive effect if they were put into play in service of a poor strategy.

I think that a decision to flow the forces had to be made now in order to have them available at the time that the strategic review would be done. But I think that puts Congress and others in a place to really push for the right strategy, because the combination of the two can turn the situation around.

Senator COLLINS. My related concern is that we're putting an American face on the effort. It is evident that, despite the heroic efforts of Secretary Gates, that most of the NATO nations are still very reluctant to step up the number of troops that they are sending to Afghanistan. We don't see something equivalent to the Anbar Awakening occurring in Afghanistan.

General, is there a danger that this is too much of an American operation rather than an Afghan-NATO operation, and thus will be more resisted by the Afghan people?

General Barno: I have the opposite experience. My experience with the Afghans during my time there and in my many dealings with them since is that they have great confidence in American military forces. If they have a choice, they want Americans in their districts and their provinces working with them out there, because in part the amount of resources that the United States brings and in part because of the relationships that we've built there.

I think the reality is as we look at the very demanding requirements ahead of us, that the U.S. is going to have to take a bigger role, that the U.S. is going to have to take a stronger leadership position, and that much more of what we do there to help fuse this very disparate effort that we have been able to put together over the last several years is going to have to be fused by American leadership.

So I think that that's a positive, and I think the Afghan people will have a lot of positive reaction to that. I used to describe it that when we began this NATO transition that brand NATO didn't have any recognition in Afghanistan, brand USA had a lot of recognition. Now, that's less true today, but it's still I think fairly true.

Senator COLLINS. But this is a country with such a history of resistance to outside powers. It just seems to me that it's imperative that we build up the Afghan army as quickly as possible so that the Afghans are taking a lead.

Ambassador?

Ambassador Dobbins: I quite agree. We need to put not so much a NATO face on this as an Afghan face. The Bush Administration decided last year to double the size of the Afghan army, but it's still probably an inadequate number and it probably will have to be increased further. The Afghans will never be able to afford to pay for that army, and therefore implicit in the decision to further increase its size is a long-term commitment to support a military structure at that level as long as necessary. But I think that's probably a far better alternative than envisaging a longer term American military presence.

Senator COLLINS. Dr. Strmecki?

Dr. Strmecki: In my experience the Afghans still want a robust American presence. The greater fear is that they're going to be abandoned and that the regional powers will again return to fight a sort of proxy war in their country. They have a very positive feeling toward us for the support we delivered to help them fight the Soviets in the 1980s. But you're right in the sense that we have to think of the forces we're sending as a bridging force until we can ramp up the Afghan forces.

The first call on new forces in my view should be in the mentoring, embedded trainer role, so that we can get that Afghan force building its size and capability as fast as possible.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Collins.

We have word that, Ambassador Dobbins, you might have to leave at 11:30. If that is the case, we understand it. But we would like to have a second round for those of us that are here, for those of you who can stay.

I want to get back to the size of the Afghan army. It's now at apparently about 65,000. The goal is to get now to double that by 2011. It originally had been 2013 and I talked to some of the Afghans yesterday and some of those who are advising us on the size of the army who are U.S. people, that it's got to be much larger than 130,000, which is the new goal, perhaps, as I think their defense, the Afghan Defense Minister Wardak suggested, maybe 250,000.

Now—and I think, Dr. Strmecki, you mentioned 250,000. Without getting into the question of how much larger, I think all three of you would want to see that expedited, would want to see a much larger, better equipped Afghan army, and we're going to try to check the long poles and see what they are. Again, my understanding has been that it's lack of trainers, a significant lack of trainers, as a matter of fact a shortfall I believe of 4,000 minimum, according to General McKiernan's estimate at least 4,000 trainers short.

The cost of the army increase is relatively small. If you assume $2,000 a year, which is more than the average pay of a soldier, an Afghan soldier, if you added 100,000 additional above the 130,000 which is our new goal, in terms of pay you're talking less than $200 million. Now, that doesn't get to equipment, but compared to the other costs it's still fairly relatively minimal.

One of you used a figure that it was at certain times more expensive to have an American soldier there than an Afghan soldier. One of you used that this morning. Was it you, Dr. Strmecki?

Dr. Strmecki: 50 to 100 times.

Chairman LEVIN. 50 to 100 times. So the cost should clearly not be the long pole in the tent. Whether it's equipment or whether or not it's trainers or something else, it should not be cost, given how much we're spending to have American troops in Afghanistan. Would you all agree with that, that cost should not be a long pole in that tent? Very briefly, would you just agree with that?

General Barno: Absolutely.

Chairman LEVIN. Mr. Ambassador?

Ambassador Dobbins: Yes, but I do think that to the extent we can succeed in turning some of the populations in the contested regions and bringing them over to our side and empowering them to provide local security, we may actually limit the burden that we'll be putting on national forces. So the total numbers may not be just the numbers for the permanent full-time army, but rather the security forces, which might be complemented by these other elements.

Chairman LEVIN. Dr. Strmecki?

Dr. Strmecki: I would agree that cost shouldn't be the factor.

Chairman LEVIN. All right. Now, getting to your point, Ambassador Dobbins—I think others have made it as well—there's a new initiative that's been begun called the Afghan Public Protection Program. It works through community councils, which select local members of the Afghan Public Protection Force who will serve neighborhood watch-like functions in their home communities, and essentially be paying local folks to maintain security in their communities, which is along the Sons of Iraq model.

Is that model that I've just described the right model, to try to get people paid locally to provide their own protection, to kind of bypass the central government and the army? And if so, what's the reaction of the Afghan national government to the Afghan Public Protection Program? Is that a joint program? Is it our program? Is it an Afghan program? What is it?

Ambassador—okay, Dr. Strmecki?

Dr. Strmecki: It's a program that is run by the ministry of interior, so it is one that the National government is fully vested in. There's a pilot program that's taking place in Wardak Province, six districts relatively near Kabul. And I think it's a good model, because when you look at what we did in Iraq, where we operated separate from the Iraqi government—and that was necessary at that time—then came the question of how do you integrate this back and how do you vet the people who had been in many cases in the enemy camp to join the forces of the Iraqi government?

Here the vetting takes place through the local community. So it's people that they trust that will have the arms put in their hands to defend their communities. So I think you've leapfrogged the kind of problem that the Sons of Iraq might have at the integration stage.

Chairman LEVIN. Ambassador?

Ambassador Dobbins: I think that I wouldn't see this so much as bypassing the army and the central government. I think there has to be relationships established that make everybody comfortable with this. For instance, these local forces are going to be quickly overrun unless they can be rapidly reinforced by either American, NATO, or ideally Afghan formal professional regular army units.

We've been using the Afghan police as a counterinsurgency force and they're not suited for that and they're getting killed in large numbers, and we need to move to a better model.

This will create some suspicion on the part, for instance, of the northern populations, the Tajiks and the Uzbeks and others. They'll see this as essentially a program for arming Pashtuns. So that particular dynamic—just like the Shia were suspicious about our arming the Sunnis—is going to have to be managed.

Chairman LEVIN. Even when it's local people?

Ambassador Dobbins: Well, they're local Pashtuns.

Chairman LEVIN. They're suspicious of local Pashtuns in Pashtun areas?

Ambassador Dobbins: Yes, not to the same degree as the Sunni and Shia are, but yes. So that aspect of it will have to be managed as well.

But I think it's a step in the right direction. The economics of it are pretty clear. If you put 50,000 American troops in, you get 10,000 boots on the ground and the rest are staff and support. If you recruited 50,000 local Afghans in these regions, your net is not just 50,000; it's 100,000 because you've taken 50,000 Taliban recruits and essentially recruited them into your own force. So the economics of it are very attractive.

Chairman LEVIN. General?

General Barno: I think it's got some merit. It's good to see as an experimental program, a pilot, and see what successes come from it. But I think there's a risk and there's concern out there that it doesn't become a rearming of warlord militias in its next incarnation. So I think we have to be very careful on how to transition into something beyond this.

The other thing I think we have to be cautious about is that we don't inadvertently take resources away from the police training program to do this program. I suspect we're going to be doing both as complements to each other, but if there's a finite set of resources I think we ought to be careful we don't undercut the other important programs we have going.

Chairman LEVIN. I'm going to come back to that police training program on my next round.

Senator Hagan.

Senator HAGAN. Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I'll be brief because I've got to preside in a little while.

But I do have a question on the upcoming elections. From what I understand, President Karzai's term ends May 21st and the constitution calls for an election 30 to 60 days before May 21st. But evidently the country's upland areas will be snowbound for several months, which somebody said that maybe when the constitution was drafted that wasn't taken into consideration in 2003.

The election commission has recently ruled that, due to the logistical and security problems, they've postponed that until August 20th; and that something I was reading today said that Karzai might hold a snap election on April 21st.

My question is what are your thoughts about the upcoming election and specifically what that would mean to our troops, and the security reasons?

Ambassador Dobbins: I don't have any information on—

Chairman LEVIN. Would you speak into the microphone.

Ambassador Dobbins: I do think that this will be a pivotal event. If it goes well, I think it could—it could be seen as the beginning of a turn-around. If it goes badly, particularly if an election is essentially indecisive, in which the results are hotly contested, then it could be a serious setback.

Dr. Strmecki: I think the Afghans and the international community are going to be able to work through the question of timing. In other big events, the loya jirgas and so forth, there were a little

give and take in terms of scheduling as was required by political circumstances or other things. I don't think a snap election is in the cards because the logistics are so challenging. General Barno is the expert on that in that he ran the security and other aspects of the 2004 election in concert with the UN and others. So I don't think there are such a thing as a snap election in Afghanistan.

General Barno: I would agree with that, but I do think that there is potential for some degree of internal crisis in Afghanistan over this particular event. There is great debate inside the country right now on who is going to be the president of Afghanistan after 21 May, because by the constitution it can't be President Karzai. Who inherits that, what does that mean, what is the impatience for the upcoming election in August?

So this is a very contentious and potentially an explosive issue that the international community has—I've gone to a couple conferences on the election in the last 6 months and there's been a feeling that this is the Afghans' election, the international community doesn't have a central role, as it did in the '04 and the '05 election. I think that has taken us into some potentially dangerous territory here.

So I think we're going to have to be very alert to the potential for some internal strife if some of these issues that Dr. Strmecki pointed out don't get resolved.

Senator HAGAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator Hagan.

Just a few more questions. You talked about, General, the importance of not weakening the effort to strengthen the National police with the program called Public Protection Program. I want to get to the police question. Just how realistic are the prospects for developing a non- corrupt, competent police force in Afghanistan?

General Barno: There's a very good program under way now called the Focused District Development Program, that takes local police out, substitutes them with national police for a period of time while the local police are taken away to be trained to a higher standard, and then the local police are brought back, they're given mentors and the National police are sent on to other locations.

That was launched I think about 18 months ago and it's had a lot of success as it marches around the country. The key to the sustained success of the program appears to be keeping those mentors with those retrained police for a prolonged period of time. There's some question whether the actual system will support that or not. In the places where that has not happened, the police have gone right back to their old ways. So I think that program is showing a lot of prospects for success and needs to be reinforced as perhaps a nationwide model. It may be under way, but I know that it's being implemented in slightly different ways in different parts of the country.

So I think there's high prospects, but we have got to get the police fixed in Afghanistan. There's not going to be an Afghan National Army soldier on every corner in Afghanistan, but there should be an Afghan policeman on every corner in Afghanistan, and that needs to be a trained individual that can do both rule of law, but also be able to react if he has Taliban come into his area. The Afghan police have not been brought up to that standard yet.

Chairman LEVIN. Ambassador, how confident are you we can reform the police in Afghanistan? How important is it?

Ambassador Dobbins: I think within limits we've been successful in police training programs in a number of places. But you have to have reasonable expectations and it's a resource and time-intensive process.

I do think that the police in Afghanistan have to some degree been misused. We need to focus the police on law and order type activities and look to other institutions and other solutions for counterinsurgency roles in isolated roles, situations in which the police will be too rapidly overcome if they're left out there on their own.

Chairman LEVIN. Dr. Strmecki, do you have any thoughts about the police? Can we reform them?

Dr. Strmecki: The police program has been a challenge from day one in Afghanistan. Certainly the stories of the corruption and abuses in police forces are largely true. Also we should recognize that there are good elements in the police and that the police have suffered probably the highest casualty rates in engagements with the insurgents.

I am hopeful, because we're having a sort of a bringing together of two factors, good leadership in the ministry of interior and a robust program to support police, development of the police. Earlier we had a good minister in 2003 and '4, but our program was underdeveloped. Then in 2005 until 2008 we had a poor minister, but a stronger program. Recently President Karzai has appointed a very good new minister of interior.

They control the police. And coupled with the robust program, we have now I think the combination of the two gives us some prospects for optimism, provided that we can do the kind of partnering and mentoring that my colleagues have talked about.

Again, that brings us back to the question of what's the first call on additional forces that we send to Afghanistan, and I think the first call on those should be in the mentoring and partnering role, not just with the ANA, but also with the police.

Chairman LEVIN. My final question relates to the National Solidarity Program. Are you familiar with this community-based development approach? As I indicated in my opening remarks, I'm personally familiar with at least one example of it, which seemed to be a very great success. We heard good things about it from other folks in Afghanistan. Are you all familiar with it? If so, would you tell us what your assessment is of it?

There's a new program that attempts to create links between the local and the National levels in this area which is called the Afghanistan Social Outreach Program. If you're familiar with that program, do you believe that it's intended to be a substitute for the National Solidarity Program?

So what do you know about NSP? Is it a good program? Is it working? Should it be expanded, continued? And is that other new program, Afghanistan Social Outreach Program, something which works along with it or is it threat to it, assuming that NSP is a good program?

Anyone of you, are you familiar with it? Dr. Strmecki?

Dr. Strmecki: National Solidarity Program I think is one of the great successes in Afghanistan. It's an Afghan- led program out of the ministry of rural reconstruction and development, that created 23,000 community development councils. So these are small councils in villages that determine what reconstruction priorities they have or development priorities they have.

Those are then channeled up to the ministry and then a grant is made to enable the local community to carry it out. So it really shows that an Afghan institution can deliver results for the people.

Chairman LEVIN. And again, let me interrupt. These are small grants.

Dr. Strmecki: That's right.

Chairman LEVIN. $16,000 or something like that.

Dr. Strmecki: Exactly. And they've carried out more than 35,000 projects across the country. So it's a tremendous success, given the environment, given the underdeveloped nature of the Afghan state. It really shows if you take that model, that national program model, you could apply it in other areas.

Now, the Afghan Social Outreach Program I have to confess I haven't heard of it. So I will have to take that and discover its nature and get back to you.

[The information referred to follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Ambassador Dobbins?

Ambassador Dobbins: The Solidarity Program certainly gets good marks from everybody I've talked to. I do think that we talked about creating local, village-based defense forces controlled by local village councils. I think the important thing is to link these different programs and to ensure that you're not only empowering the local representatives in the security area, but also to be providing resources through these other programs, so that they're not only taking responsibility for their own security, but for deciding what development programs are to be instituted and then actually delivering the resources for those deployment programs.

I think our PRTs and our military can play a strong role in ensuring that the efforts to provide those kinds of resources are adequately secured, so they actually show up and are used.

Chairman LEVIN. General?

General Barno: I would agree with Dr. Strmecki on the overall benefit of the program. The Social Outreach Program, I'm not sure if that's synonymous with what's called the IDLG, or Independent Directorate of Local Governance, which I have heard is a competitor at times with the National Solidarity Program. The IDLG is a program that President Karzai has set up to really connect him more directly to the local governance and work at the local area, in effect somewhat independently of some of the structures of government, that's had some success, but I don't have a great knowledge of how the details of that are being implemented.

Chairman LEVIN. I promised that would be the last question, but there is one that I overlooked. Predator strikes—we've talked about these—in Pakistan. There is plusses—they hit some of their targets—it misses targets, hits innocents at times. They're going to

continue, apparently. So there's up sides and down sides to those strikes.

The government of Pakistan attacks them and that creates a very negative public perception of us, and by some accounts it becomes a recruiting tool for future terrorists and people who violently attack us.

Are they worth it overall, General, in Pakistan?

General Barno: My sense is they are having a major impact on the enemy. In open session I think that's as far as I would go with that.

Chairman LEVIN. That's fine.

Ambassador?

Ambassador Dobbins: I think it's a difficult balance between the political impacts they have on Pakistan and the specific tactical victories. I don't have a basis to challenge either this or the last administration's judgment that on balance it's something that we should be doing. But clearly it's something that we should be continually reevaluating.

Chairman LEVIN. Dr. Strmecki?

Dr. Strmecki: I work primarily from open sources in following Afghanistan, so I can't adequately judge the return in terms of degrading the enemy. I've spoken to Afghans who, senior Afghan officials, who believe that it is degrading.

Chairman LEVIN. You're talking about Pakistan?

Dr. Strmecki: But I've spoken to Afghan senior officials what said those attacks are degrading some elements of the cross-border capability. But that's not direct evidence that I have.

Chairman LEVIN. Shouldn't we at least expect that Pakistan not vehemently attack something that we're doing, that they've been informed about, according to Secretary Gates? Shouldn't we at a minimum expect the Pakistan government—we understand the politics of it, that they want to disassociate themselves from the innocents who are killed. But shouldn't we expect that they can disassociate themselves without the vehement attacks on them, publicly calling for them to end, which they have? At the same time there's some suspicion that they may not want them to end, that they at a minimum acquiesce in them, know about them?

So that's my question. If they politically need to disassociate themselves, even criticize the loss of innocent lives, isn't the vehemence of their criticism beyond what we should expect the Pakistan government to be doing? Anyone want to comment on that?

General Barno: The only comment I think I'd make, Mr. Chairman, is that this is still a very new government and they are still finding their footing. They have not been—the Nation hasn't been governed by a civil leadership in many, many, many years, and this government is still trying to discover how it connects to its population, what its role is, how it should look at these issues.

I think that over time as they grow maturity that this outward manifestation of how they feel about this may change a bit.

Chairman LEVIN. Anyone else want to comment on that?

Ambassador Dobbins: I tend to think that rhetorical protestations are probably the least we can expect. The Pakistanis could be taking steps to make it more difficult for us, which they're not. They could be inhibiting our transit rights, over-flight rights.

They're not. So as a practical matter they are acquiescing in this behavior.

They are paying some political price domestically for acquiescing in it. If they were actually to stop their rhetorical protests, they would be paying an even higher domestic price. I don't know whether it's in our interest to have them do that.

Chairman LEVIN. I'm talking about kind of the extreme nature of it, the vehemence of the protest, not just the fact of it. Maybe I'm being too fine-tuned in my thought.

Dr. Strmecki?

Dr. Strmecki: I think I share your dissatisfaction with their posture, and I'd suggest that an engagement with them over time that goes to what General Barno said earlier, about what is the positive vision that our relationship will have for Pakistan's sake over the long term, is critical, so that then this aspect of the relationship can be put into a wider context, and together the Pakistani government and us can engage the public to say, we're here for the long haul for Pakistan's sake, these are the things that we're doing to improve the Pakistan economy, the educational system, universities and so forth, but we together have to deal with this dangerous extremist threat, that's a threat to both Pakistan and to the United States.

So getting the relationship to that footing I think is the solution to this unsatisfactory current situation.

Chairman LEVIN. I promised that that was the last question. Senator Reed came just in time.

Senator REED. Mr. Chairman, I would never undercut your commitment.

Chairman LEVIN. No, no.

Senator REED. No, these gentlemen have been very generous with their time, and I just again want to thank them.

Chairman LEVIN. Senator Webb has asked that a U.S. News article by Andrew Basovich called ″Afghanistan Surge Is Not Worth The Cost in Blood and Treasure″ be inserted in the record. It will be at this point.

[The information referred to follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Chairman LEVIN. You have been terrific witnesses. It's been a very valuable hearing and we're grateful for your attendance, and we will stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:00 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]