

**OPENING STATEMENT OF U.S. SENATOR JACK REED
RANKING MEMBER, SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**SD-G50
DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
Tuesday, October 6, 2015**

**HEARING WITH GENERAL JOHN CAMPBELL
COMMANDER, RESOLUTE SUPPORT MISSION
COMMANDER, UNITED STATES FORCES—AFGHANISTAN**
(As Prepared for Delivery)

General Campbell, welcome and thank you for your service. Please also pass along our appreciation to the men and women in uniform under your command in Afghanistan for their service.

General, you have now been in command for over a year of the twin missions in Afghanistan: training and advising the Afghan security forces; and counterterrorism operations, to ensure that Afghanistan does not once again become a safe haven for terrorists aiming to attack the United States, its allies or their interests.

Your testimony this morning comes at a critical time. The Administration is in the process of considering options for the size and authorities for the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan in 2016 and beyond. I strongly believe that the U.S. force posture in Afghanistan going forward should be shaped and resourced to enable you, General, to achieve your missions' objectives, based on conditions on the ground. We should also take into account our regional counterterrorism requirements, including against al Qaeda and an apparent growing presence of ISIL, in determining the long-term size and posture of the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan.

The news reports regarding security conditions in Afghanistan indicate a worsening situation over the past few months. Taliban forces continue to be formidable, despite the announcement of Mullah Omar's death. This year, casualties for the Afghan security forces have reached their highest levels since the start of the conflict. The Taliban have expanded their control over some rural areas, closing schools, reducing the Afghan people's access to services, killing or intimidating government officials, re-imposing restrictions on Afghan women and girls, and reversing the progress of the past decade in these areas.

Taliban attacks in southern and eastern Afghanistan have increased and most recently, they conducted a major operation to seize the provincial capital in Kunduz in the north.

This situation raises significant concerns. Yet, in 2015 Afghan security forces have repeatedly regrouped and retaken territory from the Taliban. It is notable that, in the past few days, Afghan forces, with enabling assistance from U.S. and NATO advisers and airstrikes, have retaken central Kunduz from the Taliban. General Campbell, I hope you will give us your assessment of whether the Afghan Army and police retain their will and capability to fight.

Security in Afghanistan depends not only on our training and advising the Afghan security forces but also on whether those forces believe there is an Afghan government and leadership that they are willing to support and defend. In Iraq, we saw our training efforts catastrophically undermined after 2011, when Prime Minister Maliki gutted the Army's leadership and replaced competent leaders with his own crony loyalists, resulting in an army that melted away when ISIL seized the city of Mosul and suffered a number of other significant losses.

In Afghanistan, we have partners in President Ghani and CEO Abdullah Abdullah. Yet, this unity government has struggled to stand up its cabinet, and there are reports of serious divisions at lower levels. General, we would be interested in your views on President Ghani's commitment to ensuring that the Afghan Army and police have competent, non-corrupt leadership, and any insights you may have on how to maintain and promote the unity of the Afghan Government.

Our counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan have had a number of significant successes this year. This is due in part to an increased level of cooperation across the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and active military operations by the Pakistan Army that have driven Al Qaeda and other militants across into Afghanistan, creating opportunities for targeting extremists. I am concerned, however, that our ability to execute successfully these critical operations will be reduced, as a result of resources being re-directed to support our campaign against ISIL in Iraq and Syria or a possible reduction in our counterterrorism footprint as part of the President's decision on the future size of U.S. forces in Afghanistan. I would also be interested in your thoughts on the operational authorities you believe will be necessary going forward

to target terrorist groups that would hope to capitalize on U.S. and international troop reductions to once again use Afghanistan as a safe haven from which to launch attacks.

Finally, our efforts to promote security in Afghanistan will be severely damaged if we are not perceived as upholding the highest standards for our forces and the Afghan forces we train. Recent news reports alleging a policy of “non-intervention” when U.S. troops were aware of sexual abuse by Afghan commanders receiving training are deeply disturbing. General Campbell, I expect you to help this committee get to the truth regarding these allegations and to confirm for us that U.S. troops will not tolerate human rights abuses by forces we are training or advising, including the sexual abuse of any civilians.

Additionally, U.S. forces must uphold the highest standards for the protection of civilians as they relate to collateral damage caused by military operations. The United States must do all it can to avoid incidents like the recent tragedy in Kunduz, where according to news reports U.S. airstrikes damaged a hospital run by Doctors Without Borders, killing more than 20 patients and staff, and wounding more than three dozen. The Defense Department has announced that your headquarters will be conducting an investigation of this incident and this committee expects to be kept informed of the progress of that investigation to the maximum extent appropriate as it goes forward. General Campbell, I am interested in hearing from you what additional steps are being taken to ensure that our rules of engagement reinforce the importance of protecting civilians from harm and preventing such tragic outcomes in the future.

I look forward to your testimony.