STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR KARL EIKENBERRY
BEFORE THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
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INTRODUCTION

Chairman Levin, Ranking Member McCain, and distinguished members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present my views on Afghanistan today. Last week, in his speech at West Point, President Obama presented the Administration's strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan. His decision came after an intensive, deliberate and far-reaching review of conditions, risks and options available. The course he outlined offers the best path to stabilize Afghanistan and to ensure al Qaeda and other terrorist groups cannot regain a foothold to plan new attacks against our country or our allies. I fully support this approach. It has been welcomed by the Afghan government, which said it will spare no effort to achieve the strategy's key objectives. I hope it will be welcomed here in Congress.

I consider myself privileged to serve in Kabul and to represent an extraordinary team of diplomats, development specialists and civilian experts from many fields and multiple agencies who form the most capable and dedicated U.S. Mission anywhere. Our civilian presence will have tripled by early 2010 and, with the support of the Congress, we anticipate it will expand further next year. More important than the numbers of people are the skills that these men and women possess, and their willingness to work tirelessly under the most difficult conditions. Many of them are out in the field with our military at the forefront of our nation's effort to stabilize Afghanistan and the region. I am extraordinarily proud of them.

I am honored to testify alongside General Stan McChrystal, my professional colleague and friend of many years, to describe how we will carry out the President's strategy for Afghanistan. My testimony will focus on the civilian role in that strategy, but I want to underscore at the outset that General McChrystal and I are united in a joint effort in which civilian and military personnel work together every day, often literally side-by-side with our Afghan partners and allies. We could not accomplish our objectives without such a combined effort, and I am proud that we have forged a close working relationship at the top and throughout our organizations, one that will deepen in coming months as additional troops and civilians arrive.

Our nation is at a critical juncture in our involvement in Afghanistan, and my testimony today represents my assessment of the situation and prospects for achieving our goals.

A mission that in past years was poorly defined and under-resourced is now clear and, thanks to the Congress, better resourced. As you know, the President on December 1st authorized 30,000 additional troops to deploy to Afghanistan on an accelerated timetable, with the goal of breaking the insurgency's momentum, hastening and improving the training of Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), and restoring security in key areas of the country. I joined Secretary Clinton and General McChrystal in Brussels last week to present the Administration's decisions to the allies, and we anticipate our troops will be joined by a substantial increase of other NATO-ISAF forces. Our military effort and civilian assistance will be closely coordinated. On the civilian side, we aim to increase employment and provide essential services in areas of greatest insecurity, and to improve critical ministries and the economy at the national level. These steps will, I believe, help to remove insurgents from the battlefield and build support for the Afghan government.

As the President said, "we will be clear about what we expect from those who receive our assistance." We expect the Afghan government to take specific actions in the key areas of security, governance and economic development on an urgent basis. In the eighth year of our involvement, Afghans must progressively take greater responsibility for their own affairs. As we reduce our combat role, we will be transforming our diplomatic, security and economic relations to reflect a more fully sovereign Afghanistan.

I firmly believe these adjustments to our course provide the best possible chance of achieving success on a reasonable timetable, but I will also give you my honest appraisal of the challenges as I see them.

No way forward is without risk. Eight years after the terrorist attacks of September 11th and the removal of the Taliban from power, Afghanistan remains a disconnected society, divided by factionalism, plagued by corruption and illegal narcotics, and challenged by insecurity. These problems are in large measure the product of nearly three decades of war, which broke down the fabric of Afghanistan's centuries-old society and contributed to deep poverty, illiteracy, drug addiction, and unemployment. This has been compounded in recent years by a growing disillusionment among Afghans, both with their own government and with the uneven results of the assistance delivered by the international community. The United States must approach the daunting complexities of Afghanistan with an awareness of our limitations. Our forces and our civilians are trying to help a society that simultaneously wants and rejects outside intervention. Afghans yearn for the peace and stability that has been denied them for too long. We will not fully heal their society's deep-seated problems, but we can help them along a path to normalcy and stability that is key to protecting our own vital interests. We are, simply put, helping

Afghanistan build security forces and other basic institutions of government to prevent a return to the conditions that it endured before September 11th, 2001.

Let me mention two challenges we face. The first is that, in spite of everything we do, Afghanistan may struggle to take over the essential tasks of governance; the second is our partnership with Pakistan, which the President has stated is inextricably linked to our success in Afghanistan. Though these risks cannot be discounted, if the main elements of the President's plan are executed, and if our Afghan partners and our allies do their part, I am confident we can achieve our strategic objectives.

I say this with conviction, because for the first time in my three tours in Afghanistan -- two while in uniform and now as ambassador -- all the elements of our national power are employed with the full support of the President and, increasingly, of our allies. We have made great strides over the last six months in improving interagency coordination and civil-military collaboration. Our military and civilian teams on the ground are the best ever fielded. More important, after a difficult election, the Afghan government shows signs of recognizing the need to deliver better governance and security, though we await concrete steps in many areas.

Achieving our objectives on an accelerated timetable will almost certainly take additional resources -- more troops, but also more development aid and additional civilian personnel to assist the Afghan government and people, so they can assume control of their own affairs. The Administration will be working with Congress in coming days and weeks to define our request.

I would like to now discuss the three main pillars of our effort in Afghanistan -- security, governance, and development -- and then say a few words about the organization of our Mission and about the wider region.

SECURITY

General McChrystal has already addressed our plans for improving security and building the Afghan National Security Forces. The civilian role in this effort at the local level is to partner with the military and with the Afghan government in restoring basic services and economic opportunity in cleared areas. I will return to this partnership and our role in it shortly. First, though, let me give you my perspective as ambassador on the security situation.

Since assuming my post in May, I have made a special point of getting outside Kabul as frequently as possible to see conditions around the country first-hand and to consult with Afghans, allies and our own civilian and military personnel. I fully concur with General McChrystal's assessment that the security situation, which worsened dramatically this past year, remains serious. The Taliban and other extremists groups exercise increasing influence in many areas of the south and east, and attacks and instability are rising in parts of the north and west as well, which long have been relatively stable. The insurgents are loosely organized, yet resilient and effective in many areas.

Augmenting U.S. and NATO-ISAF forces is critical to regain the initiative. I am confident that, as the additional U.S. troops arrive in coming months, the situation will stabilize and turn in our favor. Most Afghans have little interest in a future under the Taliban's brutal and arbitrary rule, and the troops now deploying will reassure them that they have the opportunity for a secure and better future. Our troops will serve as a bridge, improving security in key areas, just as the Marine and Army units sent earlier this year are doing with great skill in Helmand and Kandahar provinces.

Additional troops will also permit us to expand our partnering with and training of the Afghan army and police, so they can take on a progressively larger role in providing security.

We all recognize the extraordinary challenges of building competent security forces. Afghanistan has not had a national army recruited from all ethnic groups and regions for many years, and low literacy, high attrition, and the lack of resources and expertise pose continuing problems. However, our forces are highly skilled at this training and partnering mission, which they have performed ably under the most difficult circumstances in Iraq as well as in Afghanistan. I am confident that deployment of additional U.S. troops will yield improvements in the ANSF.

On the civilian side, we are supporting our military's efforts. Our Drug Enforcement Administration provides specialized training to the Afghan Counternarcotics Police. Our Federal Bureau of Investigation assists the Afghan Ministry of Interior in improving law enforcement capabilities. And, lastly, our Border Management Task Force, which includes U.S. Central Command, the Department of Homeland Security, and its Customs and Border Protection Agency, assists both the Afghan Border Police and the Customs Department.

As part of assuming the sovereign responsibility of protecting its people, the Afghan government must build the ministerial capacity to recruit, train and sustain the army and police, so that when our support begins to diminish Afghan forces are capable of protecting the country on their own. Simply put, the Afghan army and police need the full commitment of their political leadership. As President Obama said, the transition to Afghan responsibility will begin in the summer of 2011, when we expect Afghan security forces and the entire Afghan government can begin assuming lead responsibility for defending their country.

We should recognize that one reason Afghanistan has been slow to assume a larger role in providing for its own security is the widespread concern among the populace that it will be abandoned by the international community, as happened after the withdrawal of the Soviet Union

in 1989. For more than a decade afterward, Afghanistan endured brutal civil war, anarchy and later, the repressive Taliban regime that harbored and enabled al Qaeda. The fear of once again having to fend for itself again is deeply felt in the country, which lies in a volatile region where many of its neighbors have competed to control events inside Afghan borders.

While the United States does not intend to continue our high level of deployed forces indefinitely, we are fully committed to assisting Afghanistan. To give Afghans confidence that they will not be abandoned again, the United States is committed to engaging in a strategic dialogue to define our long-term relationship on the basis of shared interests and values, just as we do with other nations. We will continue to assist and advise the ANSF to ensure they succeed over the long term. Though our relations are today dominated by questions about security, we have no territorial ambitions and do not seek permanent military bases. Afghans should be confident the United States is a trustworthy friend on whom they can rely after our combat forces begin to go home. Afghanistan's place in Central and South Asia must be secure.

GOVERNANCE

The second pillar of our comprehensive strategy focuses on improving Afghan governance. I would like to describe the civilian role in this effort, first at the national level and then in the provinces and districts. At both levels, our overarching goal is to encourage good governance, free from corruption, so Afghans see the benefits of supporting the legitimate government, and the insurgency loses support.

As General McChrystal points out, one of the major impediments our strategy faces is the Afghan government's lack of credibility with its own people. To build its legitimacy, our approach at the national level is on improving key ministries, both by increasing the number of

civilian technical advisers and by providing more development assistance directly through these ministries' budgets. By focusing on key ministries that deliver essential services and security, we can accelerate the building of an Afghan government that is visible, effective and accountable.

We must support the government's ability to deliver for the Afghan people. Afghan ministers say that too much of the development assistance provided is spent outside their national budget, often on programs that are not their priorities. We agree, and as part of the President's new emphasis we are committed to providing more direct assistance. We are reviewing the financial management systems of these key ministries and, if their financial system can be certified as accountable and transparent, we provide direct funding to be used for basic services, such as health, education and agriculture. Similarly, to extend the government's reach around the country, Afghanistan needs educated, trained and honest civil servants. To accomplish this, the United States and international partners will train current government employees in public administration and help build a pool of administrators and technical managers.

Cutting across this entire effort to improve Afghans' confidence in their government is the need to combat corruption and promote the rule of law. Without institutions that serve the needs of ordinary Afghans and government officials who are accountable and honest, Afghanistan will always be in danger of returning to the conditions that made it a haven for violent extremists.

With our assistance and that of our allies, the Afghan government is steadily building law enforcement institutions to fight corruption, organized crime, and drug trafficking. With the support of the FBI, the DEA, and our military, the Ministries of Interior and Counter Narcotics, and the Afghan National Directorate of Security recently created the Major Crimes Task Force,

which is responsible for investigating major corruption, kidnapping, and organized crimes cases. Similarly, Afghanistan's Attorney General recently established a special Anti-Corruption Unit, aimed at prosecuting misconduct by mid- and high-level government officials. In addition, a specialized Anti-Corruption Tribunal is being created to handle significant corruption cases, including prosecutions involving provincial officials. Our Mission's Department of Justice team is also providing support.

In his inaugural address, President Karzai stated his intention to make merit-based appointments in his new cabinet and to implement an anti-corruption strategy, including by expanding the powers of the existing High Office of Oversight. We are encouraged by his statements, but we need to work together to aggressively implement this goal and produce results. In addition to his cabinet, it is important that qualified appointments are made at the vice minister, provincial and district levels, which would give the Afghan government greater credibility with its people and permit more rapid reforms. Secretary Clinton last month discussed with President Karzai the necessity of moving swiftly to develop concrete plans to implement this agenda to improve government accountability and performance.

Beyond the national level, I would like to address our efforts to promote governance at the provincial and district levels. We are working jointly with the military through our Provincial Reconstruction Teams, District Development Working Groups, and District Support Teams, which help build Afghan capacity in key areas, particularly in areas of greatest insecurity in southern and eastern Afghanistan. We are improving governance beyond Kabul through rule-of-law programs and other mechanisms that have proven effective in giving Afghans a greater stake in their government, including through the National Solidarity Program. We have expanded our support for the Afghan Social Outreach Program to create provincial and district

councils and build citizen involvement. We are working with the Afghan government to provide incentives for sub-national leaders to improve performance. I would like to emphasize that we are concentrating on what is essential and attainable. In all of these efforts, we must not wait too long to create an Afghan autonomous capability, or we risk building a dependency that will be that much harder to break.

Some might argue that we are reaching too high -- that Afghanistan has rarely in its history had a central government capable of carrying out these tasks and that to expect a coherent state to emerge now is unrealistic and a waste of resources. I disagree with that argument on several levels. First, while the Afghan state has never been particularly strong, Afghanistan has had functioning governments in Kabul that were widely viewed as legitimate. Second, the government structure we are helping to develop is one with the minimum set of capabilities that any state must possess to serve its people.

Our goal is not nation building, nor are we attempting to impose a Western model of governance. Afghanistan is a poor country that will remain dependent on international aid for years to come. This strategy for improving governance is based on a pragmatic assessment of the national security interests of the United States, and our belief that sustainable representative government is essential to success. Afghanistan needs a viable government so our forces can draw down and the investment of U.S. taxpayer dollars can be reduced. Achieving those goals will prevent the need for the United States and its allies to intervene to protect ourselves from extremists who, unless we succeed, might once again find refuge in Afghanistan.

The cultivation of poppy and the trafficking in opium without a doubt has the most debilitating effect on Afghan society, feeding corruption and undermining the legal economy, while generating funds for the insurgency. Our strategy for combating the pervasive impact of

illegal narcotics is multi-pronged, involving demand reduction, efforts by law enforcement and the military to detain major traffickers and interdict drug shipments, and support for licit agricultural development. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration works closely with Afghan partners to investigate and prosecute major traffickers. With our support, the Counter-Narcotics Justice Task Force has become the most effective judicial organization in Afghanistan today, with successful investigations, prosecutions, and convictions of hundreds of drug traffickers. But the narcotics problem will never have a satisfactory solution without economic development in this still desperately poor country.

DEVELOPMENT

Along with security and governance, the third pillar of our effort is development assistance. In recent months, we have adjusted our approach to focus on building key elements of Afghanistan's private-sector economy, increasing our emphasis on agriculture, enhancing government revenue collection, and improving the coordination of assistance delivery within the U.S. government and across the international community. These refinements are designed to produce measurable improvements in the lives of ordinary Afghans -- and thus to contribute directly to more effective government and to lessened support for the insurgency.

We are targeting much of our assistance where violence is worst and shifting to more flexible and faster contract and grant mechanisms, to ensure our dollars are effectively supporting our efforts in the provinces. Development specialists at USAID, joined by experts from multiple departments and agencies of our government, are focusing on key sectors, such as agriculture. Rebuilding the farm sector is essential for the Afghan government to reduce the pool of unemployed men who form the recruiting base for extremist groups. We estimate that at least

80 percent of the Afghan population derives their income, either directly or indirectly, from agriculture. Our agriculture efforts also seek to reinforce our governance strategy, so that the Agriculture Ministry will be increasingly be -- and be seen as -- a tangible example of a more effective government.

At the same time, we are encouraging long-term investment, specifically by funding water management and electrification projects that deliver power and large-scale irrigation, and we promote mining and light industry that leverage Afghanistan's agricultural products and natural resources.

We are also helping Afghanistan's government increase revenue collection. Without improvements in its ability to collect taxes and customs receipts, Afghanistan will always remain overly dependent on the international community and will struggle to meet the needs of its people. The Afghan government has made progress in recent years in increasing domestic revenue collection, which has risen from 3.3 percent of gross domestic product to 7.7 percent. That is still too low. Most low-income countries collect 11 to 12 percent of their GDP on average, and we and our other partners are working with the Ministry of Finance on reforms that will further increase revenue. The biggest problem remains corruption, however. The current rough estimate is that only half of the revenue collected actually makes it into the treasury. Low domestic revenue undermines the Afghan government's ability to provide services, while graft and bribery diminishes confidence in and support for the government. Representatives from the U.S. Treasury Department are working with the Afghan Finance Ministry and other essential ministries to build fiduciary systems that will permit us to provide them more direct funding.

Additionally, our Department of State and Commerce experts are assisting the Afghans to promote regional trade to help their economy. We expect that Afghanistan and Pakistan will

shortly conclude a Transit Trade Agreement that will open new opportunities for commerce between the two countries. Finally, we also seek Congressional support to soon pass Reconstruction Opportunity Zone (ROZ) legislation to create long term and sustainable employment opportunities. Improving official commercial and trade relations will also contribute to an improved Afghanistan-Pakistan security relationship.

OUR CIVILIAN EFFORT

Achieving our goals for Afghanistan will not be easy, but I am optimistic that we can succeed with the support of the Congress. Under-resourced for years, our Mission is now one of our government's highest priorities, with substantial additional development funds and hundreds of additional personnel. By early 2010, we will have almost 1,000 civilians from numerous government departments and agencies on the ground in Afghanistan, tripling the total from the beginning of 2009. Of these, nearly 400 will serve out in the field with the military at Provincial Reconstruction Teams or at the brigade-level and on forward operating bases. By comparison, one year ago there were only 67 U.S. civilians serving outside Kabul. The hundreds of dedicated Americans who have taken on this assignment voluntarily accept hardship and risk and deserve our recognition and appreciation for the exemplary work they are performing under very difficult conditions. They are an extraordinarily skilled group, chosen because they have the proper skills and experience to achieve the results we seek. .

In coming months, as our troops conduct operations to stabilize new areas, they will be joined by additional civilian personnel to work with our Afghan partners to strengthen governance and provide basic services as rapidly as possible. The integration of civilian and military effort has greatly improved over the last year, a process that will deepen as additional

troops arrive and our civilian effort expands. We have designated Senior Civilian Representatives (SCRs) as counterparts to NATO-ISAF commanders in each of the Regional Commands. These SCRs are senior professionals, experienced in conflict environments. They direct the work of U.S. government civilians within their regions, subject to my overall guidance. This organizational structure has two important features: First, it ensures that our civilian efforts are fully integrated with the military's in the field. Second, it is decentralized, enabling quick response to local needs, which is essential to deal with the varying conditions in Afghanistan. To maximize our impact in priority areas, we have created District Support Teams, which allow civilians in the field to collaborate with the military to build Afghan capacity in assigned districts.

U.S. foreign assistance is a comparatively small but essential fraction of the total dollars spent in Afghanistan over the last eight years. Our increased civilian presence has enabled us to more effectively and more rapidly invest our assistance in the areas of agriculture, job creation, education, health care, and infrastructure projects. Additional resources will be necessary for our effort to keep pace with the military's expansion, to carry out the President's strategy on a rapid timetable. We look forward to sharing additional details on our anticipated needs with Congress in the coming days and weeks.

We have also improved our contracting to enhance performance and increase the effectiveness of our development aid programs. In a conflict zone, a degree of program risk is unavoidable, but U.S. government agencies in the Mission remain accountable to Congress for every dollar they spend. Given the great amount of resources and emphasis devoted to Afghanistan, our programs receive extraordinary oversight, including by a Kabul-based Special

Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction, multiple audits of USAID and International Narcotics and Law Enforcement programs, and a hotline to report fraud, waste and abuse.

PAKISTAN

Finally, let me say a few words about Pakistan and the critical impact that developments in that country will have on our efforts over the next year. The expanded military and civilian effort we are undertaking in Afghanistan is likely to produce measurable improvements in security and in Afghanistan's governance capacity, but we will likely fall short of our strategic goals unless there is more progress at eliminating the sanctuaries used by Afghan Taliban and their allied militant extremists in Pakistan. The vast majority of enemy fighters our troops face on the battlefield are local Afghans, fighting in their home provinces or regions. But the Afghan Taliban and other insurgents receive significant aid and direction from senior leaders operating outside Afghanistan's borders. The Afghan Taliban's leadership may employ those sanctuaries, as they have in the past, to simply wait us out and renew their attacks once our troops begin to go home. Recognizing this, the Administration has emphasized the need for a regional approach that deals with the interrelated problems of Afghanistan and Pakistan and seeks to improve relations between the two governments.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Chairman, Afghanistan is a daunting challenge. I have tried to describe how our Mission, as part of an integrated civil-military team, will pursue the President's goals and our country's interests. I have also given you my best assessment of the risks we face. Let me, in closing, once again thank the men and women of the U.S. Mission in Afghanistan and our armed

forces. Together with the members of other NATO-ISAF armed forces, the international community and our Afghan allies, they do exemplary work on a daily basis that helps to protect the American people. They are prepared to work even harder to help the Afghan government to stand on its own and handle the threats it faces. They believe firmly that our mission is necessary and achievable, and so do I. Success is not guaranteed, but it is possible. With the additional troops and other resources provided by the President -- and with the help of Congress -- we can ensure al Qaeda never again finds refuge in Afghanistan and threatens our country.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

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