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THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF

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UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
FOR POLICY

BEFORE THE

U.S. SENATE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

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Opening Statement

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished Members of the Committee: thank you for inviting us here to update you on our efforts in Afghanistan.

Ten years ago, al-Qaeda operatives organized a deadly attack from a safe-haven in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan that killed thousands of Americans and citizens of other countries. In response, the United States, supported by valued international partners, entered Afghanistan by force in order to remove the Taliban regime and to prevent further attacks by al-Qaeda and other extremist groups operating in the region. Our mission was just, fully supported by the international community, and initially successful.

In the years that followed, however, we lost focus on Afghanistan. The war in Iraq drained resources from Afghanistan and, while our attention was turned away, al-Qaeda, the Taliban and associated extremist groups reconstituted their safe-havens straddling the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan from which they have launched attacks and sustained a resilient insurgency. At the time, we did not appreciate their resiliency, their determination to regain what they had lost, and their continuing capacity to grievously harm the United States and our allies. The return of the Taliban in Afghanistan put at risk all that we had accomplished during the first years of the war and reminded people throughout the region of previous episodes when the U.S. misunderstood the region's challenges and underestimated the commitment required to achieve our objectives. As I discussed with this committee last year, through our inattention, we risked the return of a Taliban-led Afghanistan that would likely provide a safe-haven for terrorists who could again plan and execute attacks against the United States and our allies.

President Obama, immediately upon taking office, led a thorough review of our strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan and reaffirmed our core goal: to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda, to deny it safe haven in the region, and to prevent it from again threatening the United States and our allies. In the course of that review, we found that the situation was worse than we had thought and that the Taliban had seized the momentum in Afghanistan. In response, the President committed tens of thousands of additional U.S. forces to degrade the Taliban insurgency, thereby providing time and space to build sufficient Afghan capacity. Similarly, our

NATO Allies and other partner nations surged additional forces of their own. Perhaps most importantly, we began an intensified effort to increase the size, skills and effectiveness of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF).

In December 2009, the President directed the deployment of an additional 30,000 surge forces to Afghanistan to increase security, reverse the Taliban's momentum and set the conditions for a transition to Afghan security lead. He also directed that we would begin a reduction of those surge forces in July 2011, saying, "We will execute this transition responsibly, taking into account conditions on the ground."

Last December, we conducted a follow-on review of our strategy's implementation in which we reaffirmed our core goal and the strategy's key elements: a military campaign to degrade al-Qaeda-affiliated terrorists and Taliban insurgents; a civilian campaign to build Afghan governmental capacity; and an increased diplomatic effort designed to bring a favorable and durable outcome to the armed conflict and provide a more secure future for the United States, our allies and partners, and the region. The review found that our strategy was on track, that our forces and civilians were making real progress on the ground, and that we were making great strides in growing an ANSF capable of ultimately providing security in Afghanistan. The review also validated the Lisbon Summit Declaration that called for Afghan forces to assume full responsibility for security across the whole of Afghanistan by the end of 2014, and confirmed that we will be ready to begin a responsible drawdown of our surge forces in July 2011.

The review also identified several important challenges we must address. We must continue our efforts with Pakistan to eliminate the safe havens from which al-Qaeda senior leaders continue to operate and from which insurgents are able to launch attacks against Afghanistan, Pakistan and our own forces. We must work with the Afghan government to tackle corruption, particularly predatory corruption that affects individual Afghan citizens in their daily lives and fuels the insurgency, as well as high level corruption that can undermine the trust of the Afghan people in their own government. In addition, we must work to reduce intra-regional sources of tension that affect Afghanistan's stability, spur economic development, and create the conditions necessary to enable a political settlement among Afghans and reconcile those

insurgents who are willing to renounce al-Qaeda, forsake violence, and adhere to the Afghan constitution.

Since the review, we have continued to make progress. Our strategy is working. With the surge, the U.S. and our ISAF partners have over 140,000 forces in Afghanistan placing relentless pressure on the insurgents and regaining more and more critical territory. That surge has been matched by a surge in the numbers, quality and capability of the ANSF. During the past year, the ANSF have increased by more than 70,000 personnel, and we have been able to improve quality by developing non-commissioned officers and Afghan trainers, expanding the training curriculum, adding literacy programs, and increasing retention rates. As General Petraeus will describe in detail, U.S., NATO, and other ISAF forces, partnered and fighting side-by-side with increasingly capable ANSF units throughout Afghanistan, have wrested the initiative from the insurgents and have successfully cleared the Taliban from much of the country, including strongholds in and around Kandahar and Helmand Provinces. We have turned up the pressure on al-Qaeda and their affiliated groups in the border region of Afghanistan and Pakistan and have significantly degraded their ability to plan and conduct operations throughout the theater.

Complementing our joint military operations are important, bottom-up security initiatives, led by our special forces, that provide basic assistance to Afghan communities that desire to resist Taliban influence and connect with their district and provincial government. The Afghan Local Police (ALP) program is a temporary, village-focused security program that aims to deny Taliban territory and freedom of movement in selected areas that have a limited ANSF presence. Today we have 26 validated ALP sites with a total strength of approximately 4,000 Afghans. ALP programs have already significantly disrupted insurgent activity, denied insurgent influence in key areas, and generated serious concern among the Taliban leadership. These programs complement counterinsurgency operations, ANSF development, and civilian development programs to enhance stability.

Along with our military successes, we have also ramped up our civilian efforts to improve Afghan governance and increase economic opportunity for the Afghan people. Today, thanks to the “civilian surge,” there are more than 1,100 civilian experts from nine U.S.

departments and agencies working with the Afghan Government and civil society in an effort to increase capacity and improve services delivered at the district, province and national level – with more and more of the effort directed at the local level. This is no small task in one of the poorest nations in the world with a vast and varied geography and a population of some 30 million people who have been traumatized by over 30 years of nearly continuous war.

Reintegration is now a viable alternative for those insurgents willing to break their ties to al-Qaeda, renounce violence, and agree to abide by the Afghan Constitution. I want to thank Congress for recognizing this strategic requirement and providing us important authorities and funding to support reintegration. Likewise, in London last year, the international community pledged financial support for the Afghan Government's comprehensive program designed to draw insurgents off the battlefield and help communities reintegrate them back into Afghan society. This past winter, we observed many favorable examples of both formal and informal reintegration. Formal reintegration is carried out through the three phases of the Afghan Peace and Reconciliation Process: outreach, demobilization, and community recovery. To date, nearly twenty provinces have created reintegration councils, and several hundred militants have left the battlefield through this process. Informal reintegration, which is more common, but less easily measured, refers to those insurgents who simply stop fighting and become productive members of their community.

While reintegration reduces the manpower available to the insurgency, reconciliation focuses on the development of a political solution that ends armed opposition to the Afghan government by major insurgent groups. This past June, President Karzai convened the Afghan Consultative Peace Jirga that established a framework for national reconciliation. He also formed the High Peace Council that includes representation from each of Afghanistan's major ethnic and political stakeholders, including women. The High Peace Council has had substantive discussions with representatives from a variety of insurgent groups and recently met with key leaders in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey to help build consensus towards a political resolution of the conflict. The United States strongly supports these Afghan-led efforts, though we recognize that this will not be a quick or easy process.

We have always recognized that we cannot succeed in Afghanistan through military operations alone. We welcome and encourage peaceful political participation by those Taliban leaders who are willing to reject al-Qaeda, foreswear violence, and accept the Afghan Constitution in order to reconcile with their fellow Afghans. As Secretary Clinton recently said, "Taliban militants will have to decide that they are better off working within the Afghan political system rather than fighting a losing struggle alongside al-Qaeda…"

As we consider a political process in Afghanistan, we must understand the broad regional dynamics at play. Afghanistan is a proud and sovereign nation that fears and resents meddling or interference in its affairs by its neighbors. Nevertheless, Iran and Pakistan still hold the potential to support or spoil progress in Afghanistan. India and the Central Asian States also seek to have their deep concerns about the security and stability of the region addressed. We will endeavor to work together with these nations to support our core goal in Afghanistan and Pakistan and the long-term stability of the region.

Let me turn now to some of the key milestones and challenges that lie ahead.

Transition -- or *Inteqal* in Dari -- is a process by which the ANSF will progressively take lead responsibility for the security of Afghan provinces and municipalities from ISAF.

Transition is built upon the following principles:

- Transition is a process, not an event and will be based upon an assessment of conditions on the ground.
- Transition is a bottom-up process that will be informed by local assessments.
- Transition is a process by which ISAF will "thin out" and progressively shift, as conditions allow, from a partnering role, to a mentoring role.
- Headquarters elements will be retained, even as combat elements thin out to facilitate and enable ANSF operations.
- As ISAF thins out, some of the "transition dividend" will likely be reinvested in other geographic or functional areas such as training.
- The transition process goes beyond terrain and also applies to key Afghan governmental institutions.

- We must ensure that get transition right the first time, so this process is irreversible.

The Joint Afghan – NATO *Inteqal* Board or JANIB met in February to determine which areas were ready for transition. This assessment was based on the readiness of the ANSF to take the lead for security responsibilities and the readiness of local government structures to provide necessary services to the people. The results of the JANIB were reviewed at last week's NATO Defense Ministerial meeting and we expect President Karzai to announce his decision on the first tranche of municipalities and provinces for transition on March 21st.

We should expect the implementation of the transition process to reflect the diverse circumstances and varied requirements of districts and provinces across Afghanistan. That said, our objective in each case is for transition to be an irreversible process that will unfold during the months and years ahead city by city, district by district, and province by province, as the security situation improves and Afghan capacity grows. During the transition, Coalition forces will "thin out" and move from a position of being in the lead for security to one where Afghan forces are in the lead with an ISAF partner: first in tactical overwatch, then in strategic overwatch. In addition to transition in the field, we are also building capacity in the Ministries of Defense and Interior to enable the transition of key functions at the national level. Even by the end of 2014 when Afghans will have the lead for security nationwide, I anticipate that some U.S. forces will remain in Afghanistan in order to train and assist the ANSF and conduct combined counterterrorism operations.

As the President directed, the surge forces that we deployed to Afghanistan last year will conduct a responsible, conditions-based force reduction beginning in July 2011. I know that General Petraeus will expand upon this issue, but let me just say that it is too early to put a number on the size of the initial withdrawal. The pace and scope of this withdrawal will be based upon conditions on the ground. At the same time, as the transition process continues, and as ISAF forces thin out in a given district or province, we anticipate that some forces will be reinvested in other geographic areas or missions, such as training the ANSF.

The transition that will take place between now and December 2014 in no way signals our abandonment of Afghanistan. Our nation has made that mistake before, and we are determined not to repeat it. President Obama and President Karzai have agreed that the United States and Afghanistan will have an enduring strategic partnership beyond 2014, and we are currently working with the Afghans on the details of that partnership. Afghans must stand in the lead, but they will not stand alone.

This strategic partnership, along with the enduring partnership declaration NATO signed with President Karzai at the Lisbon Summit, sends an important message to the government and people of Afghanistan, to our friends and allies, to al-Qaeda and the Taliban, and to others in the region: we remain committed to Afghanistan. As we responsibly reduce our combat forces, and as Afghan forces take the lead, we will continue to work with the Afghan people to assist them in the development of their key institutions. Although the scope of our commitment will evolve, our core goal will remain unchanged.

Meanwhile, logistical support also remains a challenge in Afghanistan. We are working, along with the Department of State, to secure the additional approvals that we need from countries participating in the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) that will allow us to further reduce the load we place on Pakistan's infrastructure and provide additional routes for our personnel and cargo transiting into Afghanistan. We have already secured necessary approvals from Russia and we are negotiating with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to conclude further agreements and arrangements regarding NDN routes that they control. We likewise appreciate the cooperation we have had with Kyrgyzstan's democratically elected government to support our use of the Transit Center at Manas and have recently concluded an agreement with Kyrgyzstan that will permit us to contract with a new state-owned enterprise to help meet our fuel needs. Together, these efforts demonstrate the broader and shared interest in regional cooperation to bring an end to extremism and to support a stable and secure Afghanistan.

Pakistan, too, is inextricably linked to a successful outcome in the region, in both the near and long term. Pakistan has a pivotal role to play in our efforts to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda and its affiliates; to help bring about a durable political solution in Afghanistan; and to promote and sustain long-term regional stability. A lasting political solution in Afghanistan will

require Pakistan to be part of the process. However, Pakistan will have to respect Afghan sovereignty and work with Afghanistan to improve regional stability. Additionally, Pakistan must take decisive steps to ensure that the Afghan Taliban cannot continue to conduct the insurgency from Pakistani territory. Continued pressure from the Pakistani side is essential to help push the Taliban toward reconciliation.

Pursuing a strategic partnership with Pakistan based on a foundation of mutual interest, mutual respect, and mutual trust guides our civilian-military efforts. Over the long term, this partnership could lead to enduring linkages between our two peoples; stronger trade and investment ties; greater regional and internal stability; and a secure Pakistan whose regionally-integrated economy is growing and benefiting all of its people and its neighbors.

There is no question that there are significant hurdles to overcome to realize this vision. The history of U.S.-Pakistan relations is fraught with disappointments, leading many in both countries to see our relationship as driven by transitory interests. In Pakistan, this is manifested in the expectation that we may abandon the region once again as soon as we have achieved our immediate objectives in Afghanistan. Our efforts to date have yielded progress in changing this mindset. However, overcoming years of mistrust will take patience, as well as sustained effort and resources.

Our approach with Pakistan is to build an effective partnership that advances both U.S. and Pakistani interests, while also demonstrating to our Pakistani partners that we will remain a strong supporter of their security and prosperity over the long-term. Central to our efforts is aligning U.S. and Pakistani interests with respect to denying safe haven to all violent extremist organizations.

Pakistan's people have suffered greatly at the hands of extremists, with approximately 20,000-30,000 civilian casualties resulting from attacks on mosques, schools – particularly girls' schools – and even a World Food Program food distribution site. Pakistan's military has incurred nearly 3,000 personnel killed in action and over 8,000 wounded as a result of extremist attacks and kinetic operations against militants. In addition to the human toll, the financial burden of nearly a decade of conflict inside of and adjacent to Pakistan has been significant, both

in opportunity costs of economic growth and in sustaining more than 140,000 troops in combat along on their border with Afghanistan. Still, Pakistan has continued the fight.

Pakistan's will to confront extremist organizations, particularly those that it does not view as a direct threat to the Pakistani state, remains a key challenge. However, its deficiencies in capacity are even more daunting. Pakistan faces a determined, complex, and resilient set of insurgent enemies. Pakistan's military has historically focused on a major conventional land war with India and they still view India as their existential threat. The capabilities needed for a counterinsurgency campaign are different and require appropriate training and equipment. We are helping Pakistan to build this much needed capacity through train and equip programs funded by the Pakistan Counterinsurgency Fund (PCF) and the Pakistan Counterinsurgency Capabilities Fund (PCCF), for which Congress has provided significant support. However, enhancing Pakistan's counterinsurgency capabilities to the level needed for successful operations to clear areas then "hold" and "build" in them will require our sustained civilian and military assistance.

Before addressing some of Pakistan's key deficiencies, it is important to remark on the progress Pakistan's military has achieved to date.

First, Pakistani operations since 2009 in Swat, South Waziristan, and a number of other agencies and areas in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (formerly known as the Northwest Frontier Province), are unprecedented.

Second, Pakistan's movement of six divisions, or 1/3 of their Army, from the Indian border to the border with Afghanistan demonstrates their recognition of the significant threat emanating from certain extremist groups.

Third, Pakistan's military leadership has increased cross-border coordination with ISAF and Afghan security forces. Part of this increased coordination resulted from a tragic accident that occurred last September when ISAF forces accidentally killed three Pakistani border soldiers who were mistaken for insurgents. This incident not only led to enhanced procedures being put in place to avoid future such tragedies, but also a greater measure of operational coordination designed to ensure that kinetic operations on one side of the border do not allow insurgents to escape with impunity to the other. Such coordination would have been impossible just two years ago.

However, despite this progress, Pakistan's military forces have not yet established effective control over important areas where extremists and insurgents operate. In many cases where the military has undertaken operations to clear insurgents and hold territory, Pakistan's inadequate civilian and military capacities for the "build" phase have prevented ultimate transfer of those areas to civilian control. This deficiency forces the Pakistan military to leave large numbers of forces in cleared areas to "hold" them for indefinite periods of time rather than redeploying them to undertake new operations. In several cases, such as Mohmand Agency, military forces have been required to repeat clearing operations as insurgents have reinfiltrated.

Addressing these issues will not only require sustained military and security assistance, but the financial assistance provided through the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act of 2009, also known as Kerry-Lugar-Berman. The efforts the Department of State and USAID are undertaking through the Strategic Dialogue to reach all segments of Pakistan's population with civilian capacity training and new infrastructure are essential elements for Pakistan's ability to "hold" and "build" areas to make them resistant to militant return.

In many ways, we are still in the early stages of seeing our renewed civilian-military partnership with Pakistan gain traction. Our team in the Office of the Defense Representative – Pakistan has been able to build and nurture partnerships with Pakistan's security forces on every level, including during the historic flooding and subsequent recovery efforts in the summer of 2010. These relationships have been critical to working through challenges that might once have broken the relationship, such as the late September 2010 incident on the Pakistani border post. Instead, the ability to continue communicating through crises has led to greater coordination that advances our mutual interest in a stable and secure Pakistan.

We have also made significant progress by supporting Pakistan's efforts to define their near and long-term requirements as they restructure their forces to take on this counterinsurgency fight. Through the Exchanges in Defense Planning (EDP) process, we worked with the Pakistani military leadership to develop a shared five-year vision for training and procurement. That shared vision formed the basis for the Administration's Fiscal Year 2012 request for $350 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF), $5 million in International Military Education and Training (IMET), and $1.1 billion in PCCF for the first year of the Multi-Year Security Assistance Commitment for Pakistan that Secretary Clinton announced in October 2010. That

commitment includes $2.029 billion of FMF and IMET over 5 years, with PCCF levels set annually according to conditions on the ground.

"Train-advise-and-equip" programs with Pakistan's military and paramilitary forces are central to pursuing our near-term objectives of eliminating terrorist sanctuaries and disrupting and defeating the al-Qaeda network. Through congressional support for programs like the PCF and PCCF, we are increasing Pakistan's capacity to take on militant networks. This effort will take time, and we are working to reform our security assistance system to make it more responsive to the wartime train-and-equip needs of Pakistan, Afghanistan and other partners.

Let me conclude my remarks on Pakistan with a comment concerning the detention of U.S. diplomat Raymond Davis. The U.S. government remains extremely concerned about the continued detention of Mr. Davis and views this as a violation of Pakistan's international commitments under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. The State Department remains actively engaged in a dialogue with the government of Pakistan about releasing Mr. Davis as quickly as possible. It is critical, however, that we work to resolve this issue, so that it does not derail the important progress we have made in the last two years in building a stronger and deeper relationship between our countries.

Finally, I would like to turn to the human and financial costs of this war. Many of you have expressed concern with these costs, especially in light of our battlefield casualties and our fiscal pressures here at home. You face these costs each time you sign a letter to a constituent who has lost a loved one and each time you vote on war funding. This concern has been expressed by our ISAF allies and partners as well.

But, let me be absolutely clear. As the President said, the threat to our national security and the security of our friends and allies that emanates from the borderland of Afghanistan and Pakistan is not hypothetical. There is simply no other place in the world that contains such a concentration of al-Qaeda senior leaders and operational commanders. Al-Qaeda and the other terrorist organizations that operate in this region have a proven ability to infiltrate across borders to conduct attacks. These dangerous groups have established safe-havens inside of a nuclear-armed state and they are allied with the Taliban, a movement that seeks to overthrow the government of Afghanistan and contributes to the destabilization of Pakistan. To allow these

hostile organizations to flourish in this region is to put the security of the United States and our friends and allies at grave risk.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate the basic principle that is at the heart of our efforts in Afghanistan. The outcome we seek is the defeat of al-Qaeda and the denial of the region as a sanctuary for al-Qaeda and its affiliates. This objective is the reason why our brave servicemen and servicewomen have sacrificed so much. It is why we have invested so much treasure.

This remote region has served as a crucible for the most catastrophic terrorist actions of the past decade. As we learned at great cost after abandoning the region in 1989, staying engaged over the long term is critical to achieving lasting peace and stability in this region and to securing our national interests. We are determined to bring this war to a successful conclusion, for the sake of our own security, but also for the security of the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan who have suffered so much, and who have so much to gain from a secure, lasting peace.

Members of the committee, I want to thank you for providing the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to your continued and invaluable support for the policies and programs that are critical to our success in Afghanistan and Pakistan. ###