

NOMINATION OF GENERAL JOSEPH F. DUNFORD, JR., USMC, FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF GENERAL AND TO BE COMMANDER, INTERNATIONAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE FORCE/COMMANDER, U.S. FORCES, AFGHANISTAN

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2012

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:50 a.m. in room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator Carl Levin (chairman) presiding.

Committee members present: Senators Levin, Lieberman, Reed, Webb, McCaskill, Udall, Hagan, Begich, Manchin, Shaheen, Blumenthal, McCain, Inhofe, Sessions, Wicker, Portman, Ayotte, Collins, and Graham.

Committee staff member present: Richard D. DeBobes, staff director.

Majority staff members present: Gerald J. Leeling, counsel; William G.P. Monahan, counsel; Michael J. Noblet, professional staff member; and William K. Sutey, professional staff member.

Minority staff members present: Adam J. Barker, professional staff member; Christian D. Brose, professional staff member; Pablo E. Carrillo, minority general counsel; Lauren M. Davis, minority staff assistant; Paul C. Hutton IV, professional staff member; Daniel A. Lerner, professional staff member; Elizabeth C. Lopez, research assistant; and Diana G. Tabler, professional staff member.

Staff assistants present: Jennifer R. Knowles, Brian F. Sebold, and Lauren M. Gillis.

Committee members' assistants present: Brian Burton and Vance Serchuk, assistants to Senator Lieberman; Carolyn Chuhta, assistant to Senator Reed; Gordon Peterson, assistant to Senator Webb; Jason Rauch, assistant to Senator McCaskill; Casey Howard, assistant to Senator Udall; Christopher Cannon, assistant to Senator Hagan; Brittany Keates, assistant to Senator Begich; Mara Boggs, assistant to Senator Manchin; Patrick Day, assistant to Senator Shaheen; Anthony Lazarski, assistant to Senator Inhofe; Lenwood Landrum, assistant to Senator Sessions; Todd Harmer, assistant to Senator Chambliss; Joseph Lai, assistant to Senator Wicker; Brent Bombach, assistant to Senator Portman; Brad Bowman, assistant to Senator Ayotte; Nick Rossi, assistant to Senator Collins, Sergio

Sarkany, assistant to Senator Graham; and Charles Brittingham, assistant to Senator Vitter.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CARL LEVIN, CHAIRMAN

Chairman LEVIN. Good morning, everybody.

The committee meets this morning to consider the nomination of General Joseph Dunford, Jr., U.S. Marine Corps to be the next Commander, U.S. Forces, Afghanistan and Commander of the International Security Assistance Force.

This morning's hearing was originally scheduled to also include consideration of the nomination of General John Allen to be Commander of the U.S. European Command and Supreme Allied Commander. General Allen, of course, currently holds the positions for which General Dunford is nominated. However, earlier this week, the Department of Defense requested that General Allen's nomination be put on hold pending a Department of Defense Inspector General review. We have agreed and hope that the review can be completed promptly.

General Dunford brings to this nomination a distinguished military career with over 35 years of military service. He is currently the assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps and has commanded combat forces in Iraq. General, we thank you for your many years of service and for your willingness to once again answer the call to serve this Nation.

Let me also extend our thanks to your family whose support is so essential. As is the tradition of this committee, I would invite you to introduce your wife Ellen and any family members or friends who may be here with you this morning when you make your opening remarks.

Today's hearing comes at an important time and follows a string of negative reports in the media over the last few months that have raised questions about various aspects of the campaign and the performance of the Afghan Security Forces. We hope that this morning General Dunford can provide the broader picture of our goals in Afghanistan, the progress in building the Afghan Security Forces, what the prospects are for the next 2 years in terms of transition to Afghan control, and what steps the U.S. coalition and Afghan leaders are taking to address and mitigate the insider threat.

The recent increase in insider attacks by Afghan National Security Forces personnel or impersonators against U.S. and coalition forces threatens the essential trust between ISAF forces and our Afghan partners. At the same time, according to ISAF data, the number of enemy-initiated attacks over the last 3 months is down 5 percent compared to the same 3-month period a year ago.

If confirmed, General Dunford would assume command as the security transition in Afghanistan enters a critical phase. Getting Afghan Security Forces in the lead for security continues to be the key to the success of the Afghanistan mission. Afghan Security Forces are moving into the security lead in designated areas around the country as coalition forces step back more and more into a supporting role. The areas under Afghan security lead now cover approximately 75 percent of the Afghan population. Afghan Security Forces will have primary responsibility for security

throughout Afghanistan once the transition process is completed next summer. ISAF forces will continue to provide support, including combat support if necessary, until the end of 2014. Afghan Security Forces have, in general, shown that they are willing to fight, and the Afghan people want to have their own forces rather than coalition forces keeping their communities secure.

A key element of this transition which General Dunford will be overseeing is the shift in the ISAF mission from having coalition combat forces partnering and operating with similar units of the Afghan forces to a security force assistance mission. Now, in that mission mid-grade officers and senior non-commissioned officers form security force assistance teams (SFATs), which are embedded in small units as advisors within Afghan forces to help build their capabilities, even as Afghan forces continue their move into the lead for combat operations.

General Dunford will be responsible, if confirmed, for implementing the President's decision on the drawdown of U.S. forces in Afghanistan during the next 2 years to post-2014 levels. An important milestone was achieved at the end of September with the drawdown of U.S. forces to the 68,000 level and the completion of the withdrawal of the 33,000 U.S. surge force. Secretary Panetta said earlier this week that General Allen and the White House are in the process of discussing options for the U.S. enduring presence in Afghanistan after 2014, a process that Secretary Panetta hopes will be completed "within the next few weeks." Secretary Panetta stressed that the U.S. enduring presence in Afghanistan would be based on the missions that U.S. forces would be carrying out, missions like counterterrorism, advising and assisting the Afghan forces, and providing those forces important enabling capabilities.

General, we would like to hear from you this morning about the pace of the drawdown of U.S. forces from the current 68,000 troop level to the level of our enduring presence after 2014. Do you expect the drawdown to occur at a steady pace, as the President has said, or do you anticipate the pace of the drawdown remaining at 68,000 through next year's fighting season and then dropping rapidly sometime thereafter?

Finally, the United States and Afghanistan have begun negotiations on a status of forces agreement, or SOFA, as required by the bilateral enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement that Presidents Obama and Karzai signed in May. The SOFA will provide the necessary protections for U.S. troops deployed to Afghanistan after 2014, and we would be interested in your thoughts, General, on the importance of the SOFA for signaling to the Taliban and Afghanistan's neighbors that the U.S.-Afghanistan partnership will be an enduring contribution to regional stability. And we would also hope you would address what you see as the U.S. red lines in those SOFA negotiations.

So we look forward to your testimony this morning.

I now call upon Senator McCain.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and let me thank our distinguished witness for joining us this morning and for his many years of impressive service in uniform.

Let me start by saying a word about General John Allen, our Commander in Afghanistan, who we had expected to testify today on his nomination to be Commander of U.S. European Command and Supreme Allied Commander.

While the committee awaits the conclusion of the Defense Department's Inspector General investigation, I continue to believe that General Allen is one of our best military leaders and I continue to have confidence in his ability to lead the war in Afghanistan as well as to serve in the post for which he has now been nominated.

General Dunford, I am grateful for your willingness to accept this nomination to serve as Commander of U.S. Forces and the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, but I also believe that if you are confirmed, you will have a difficult road ahead of you. I think our mission in Afghanistan is at a very serious and troubling crossroads, and much of the recent reporting is deeply worrisome.

Unfortunately, over the past few months, our enemies have been rather successful in carrying out so-called insider attacks that have killed and wounded many American and Afghan troops. As I am sure you would agree, General Dunford, it is hard to overstate the damage these kinds of attacks do to the morale of our troops and to our broader mission of supporting the growth and professionalization of Afghan forces. It is hard for our troops to work effectively with their Afghan partners when they have reason to mistrust some among them. While I support the decision to suspend many of these partnering efforts, it is harmful nonetheless.

We are also seeing more and more reports of declining security in Afghanistan, including in a province like Bamiyan, which was once one of the safest places in the country. Al Qaeda is working harder than ever to reestablish safe havens in eastern Afghanistan, and there is some evidence that they are succeeding. In what was perhaps the most brazen and least reported attack this year, a small unit of Taliban operatives fought their way into Camp Bastion in Helmand Province in September and managed to destroy six Harrier aircraft at a total loss of nearly \$200 million. Talk about asymmetrical warfare. Two marines were killed in that attack, including Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Raible, a Marine aviator, who lost his life after running toward the fight and bravely fighting heavily armed insurgents with only his pilot sidearm.

Not surprisingly, this growing insecurity is heightening ethnic and other factional tensions in Afghanistan which could portend a renewal of civil conflict. Earlier this week, the New York Times reported that Ismail Khan, a powerful Tajik warlord who was responsible for some of the worst violence of Afghanistan's civil war, is calling on his supporters to re-arm and prepare for a resumption of conflict against the Taliban. These comments were echoed by Marshal Mohammed Fahim, another powerful former warlord and a Tajik, who stated, quote, if the Afghan Security Forces are not able to wage this war, then call upon the Mujaheddin.

All of these problems in Afghanistan are compounded by the two major strategic challenges we face: the continued corruption and ineffectiveness on the part of the Afghan Government and the safe

haven for Taliban leadership and other insurgent groups that exist in Pakistan and which continues to go unaddressed or worse.

None of these developments should be surprising. They can all be traced back to the fundamental doubt about American resolve in this conflict, a doubt that is shared among our friends and enemies alike in Afghanistan and the region. The President's repeated emphasis on withdrawal, without laying out what would constitute a successful and sustainable transition, has only fed the belief in Afghanistan that the United States is committed to getting out regardless of conditions on the ground. This doubt has encouraged all actors in Afghanistan and in the region to hedge their bets, which increases the worst instincts of the Afghan Government and increases the chance of a return to civil conflict in our absence.

Our mission is now at a crossroads and we can go down one of two paths. The first is the one that I fear the President will embark on, implementing aggressive cuts to our forces in Afghanistan before 2014 and then leaving a presence of supporting forces that is not equal to the tasks they need to perform if a new security agreement is concluded at all. This path would constitute a rush to failure, place unnecessary risks on our forces, and I could not support it in any respect.

There is, however, another path. We could delay the further withdrawal of U.S. forces until 2014 so as to give our commanders maximum flexibility and combat power to achieve our goals. Furthermore, we could conclude a robust security agreement with the Afghan Government that would maintain sufficient numbers of U.S. forces to perform the tasks that will continue to be essential beyond 2014, counterterrorism, intelligence and training of Afghan forces. Both of these steps could form the military basis of a political strategy to foster better Afghan governance, better cooperation from countries in the region, and ultimately a negotiated end to the war on terms that are favorable to our Afghan allies and us.

General Dunford, if confirmed, yours will be a key voice in shaping these decisions. I hope that you will advocate for actions that can limit the risk to our mission and increase our chances of success. I also hope that you will speak truth to power and resist the kind of precipitous withdrawal of support for Afghanistan that would be a sure recipe for failure. All of us look forward to hearing how you would intend to execute the major responsibilities that will be entrusted to you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator McCain.

General, let us now turn to you.

STATEMENT OF GEN. JOSEPH F. DUNFORD, JR., USMC FOR RE-APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF GENERAL AND TO BE COMMANDER, INTERNATIONAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE FORCE/COMMANDER, U.S. FORCES, AFGHANISTAN

General DUNFORD. Chairman Levin, Senator McCain, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I am truly honored that the President has nominated me to command the International Security Assistance Force and U.S. Forces in Afghanistan.

Joining me today is my wife Ellen. I am very fortunate to have her love and support. She is a great mother to our three children, now young adults, and also serves as a tireless advocate for our military families. She is unquestionably the most valuable player in the Dunford family.

I would like to begin by thanking this committee for their support to our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines over the past 11 years of conflict. Due to your leadership, our young men and women in harm's way have been well trained, well equipped, and well supported. Their performance and the strength of our military families reflect that support.

As we all know, on September 11, 2001, members of al Qaeda murdered almost 3,000 innocent people. We also know the attacks were planned in their base of operations in Afghanistan with the support of the Taliban. For more than a decade, Americans in uniform and their civilian counterparts have responded with extraordinary courage, commitment, and self-sacrifice to deny safe haven to al Qaeda in Afghanistan and to prevent the Taliban from overthrowing the Afghan Government. Throughout that time, we have been shoulder to shoulder with our coalition and Afghan partners.

As a result of our shared sacrifice and commitment, our goals are within reach. In the months ahead, in accordance with our national objectives and Lisbon commitments, we will complete the transition to Afghan security lead and set the conditions for an enduring partnership with the Afghan people.

I recognize that much work remains to be done and the challenges will be many, but with continued focus and commitment, I believe our goals are achievable. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with our partners to overcome the challenges, to meet our objectives, and to make certain our shared sacrifices matter. If confirmed, I also look forward to the opportunity to lead our young men and women in Afghanistan and I will do all I can to ensure they have the wherewithal to accomplish the mission and return home to their families.

With that, I thank the committee again for allowing me to appear before you today. I am prepared to answer your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Dunford follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, General.

We have a standard set of questions which I know are here somewhere that we ask of our nominees, and so let me now ask them of you.

Have you adhered to applicable laws and regulations governing conflicts of interest?

General DUNFORD. I have, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Do you agree, when asked, to give your personal views, even if those views differ from the administration in power?

General DUNFORD. I do, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Have you assumed any duties or undertaken any actions which would appear to presume the outcome of the confirmation process?

General DUNFORD. I have not, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Will you ensure your staff complies with deadlines established for requested communications, including questions for the record and hearings?

General DUNFORD. I will, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Will you cooperate in providing witnesses and briefers in response to congressional requests?

General DUNFORD. I will, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Will those witnesses be protected from reprisal for their testimony or briefings?

General DUNFORD. They will, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. And do you agree, if confirmed, to appear and testify upon request before this committee?

General DUNFORD. I do, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. And do you agree to provide documents, including copies of electronic forms of communication, in a timely manner when requested by a duly constituted committee or to consult with the committee regarding the basis for any good faith delay or denial in providing such documents?

General DUNFORD. I do, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Let us start with a 7-minute first round, if that is okay.

One of the keys to success in Afghanistan is building the size and capacity of the Afghan Security Forces. And the plan calls for those forces to reach 352,000—or they call for it to reach 352,000 by October of this year, although it has been reported recently that the schedule for the building of those forces slipped by a few months. Do you know where that is?

General DUNFORD. Mr. Chairman, I do. All of the individuals to meet the 352,000 goal have been recruited. Not all the individuals have been trained, and my expectation, based on my recent visit, is that that training will be completed in early 2013.

Chairman LEVIN. Now, Senator Graham and I and I think others on this committee have urged a retention of a large Afghan army and security forces and that it not be reduced to the 230,000 model which has been apparently adopted for starting in, I believe, 2015, which was adopted at the NATO Chicago summit. We really feel that this is a very good investment of dollars, and it is a heck of a lot better than having a larger number of American troops there. And even though there is, obviously, a greater cost to us and our allies for helping to maintain a force at the larger level of 352,000, instead of after a few years reducing that number to 230,000, nonetheless we are very concerned about that model. We believe that it is based on presumptions about what the security conditions will be years from now and based on the affordability of Afghan forces rather than our commanders' best military judgments.

Would you assure us that in making any recommendations on the future size of the Afghan Security Forces that you will provide your best military judgment independent of the affordability considerations?

General DUNFORD. Mr. Chairman, I would. And I am aware that the current size and the timeline for the drawdown of the Afghan Security Forces was based on some analysis done by the Center for Army Analysis a couple years ago. And if I am confirmed, one of the first things I will do is revisit the assumptions associated with

that plan and ensure that we maintain the capabilities and capacities of the Afghans such that they can meet their security requirements post-2014.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Now, what is your assessment of the performance of the Afghan Security Forces, particularly in those areas where they have moved into the lead for providing security?

General DUNFORD. Mr. Chairman, I actually came back from my recent visit encouraged by the capability of the Afghan Security Forces. I can remember clearly my first visit to Afghanistan in 2008 when at the time we had 10 coalition members for every member of the Afghan Security Forces and there had been very little training and very poor equipment.

On my recent visit, I was encouraged. We have actually had corps level operations in Regional Command South planned and executed by the Afghans alone. From my perspective today, the Afghans have the capability with the support we are providing to provide security. 76 percent of the Afghan population is currently secured as a result of tranches 1, 2, and 3 of the security transition. They are secured by Afghan National Security Forces. And I believe, based on a trajectory of development of the Afghans since we have started this effort through 2014 and with the assumption I make post-2014 with the level of commitment we will continue to provide, I believe the Afghan National Security Forces will be able to meet the security requirements in Afghanistan.

Chairman LEVIN. Our President has indicated that he expects that the drawdown is going to occur at a steady pace. Is that your understanding of what his statement was, and what is your own belief as to that issue?

General DUNFORD. Mr. Chairman, I think, if I am confirmed, what I need to do is make an assessment of the capabilities and capacities that we will maintain over the next 2 years such that they meet our objectives. First, we need to have necessary security to meet milestone 2013 this coming summer where we transition to full security lead by the Afghans. Second, we need to ensure that we have set the proper conditions for successful elections in 2014, and finally, we need to make sure that we have the proper forces to smoothly transition in December 2014.

As I make a recommendation, I will look at the strength of the enemy. I will look at the capabilities and capacities of the Afghan National Security Forces, judge the capabilities and capacities of coalition forces, and then make a recommendation on what our force contribution ought to be between now and 2014 and then beyond as we go into the decade of transformation.

Chairman LEVIN. The Afghan people apparently continue to have a very high level of confidence in the Afghan National Army with 93 percent, according to the polls, saying that they have a fair amount or a great deal of confidence in the army, and indeed the confidence has even grown in the Afghan National Police with 82 percent of the Afghan people, according to those polls, expressing some level of confidence in them.

Do you believe that those numbers and percentages and polls are accurate when it finds that a significant majority of the Afghan

people have high confidence or a reasonable level of confidence in the Afghan National Army and in the National Police?

General DUNFORD. Mr. Chairman, I do not have a sense for the methodology that was used to develop those statistics, and if I am confirmed, that would be an area that I would look deeply into.

Chairman LEVIN. All right.

Earlier this week, it was reported that the Afghans' Energy and Water Minister, Mr. Khan, and a well-known warlord from Herat, called for militias in Afghanistan to re-arm and to take up the defense of the country. Now, this would seem to indicate a lack of confidence in the Afghan National Security Forces. Suggesting that he would rebuild militia forces, Mr. Khan has raised tensions among Afghan leadership and fears that other warlords may re-arm threatening to weaken support for the government and increasing the risk of civil war.

And I am wondering if you can give us your assessment of Mr. Khan's statements and the challenges that re-armed militias would pose to political stability and to plans for the transition of full security responsibility to the Afghan National Security Forces.

General DUNFORD. Mr. Chairman, those militias would absolutely have an adverse effect on stability. I think what is necessary now—you alluded to a lack of confidence. Senator McCain in his opening remarks also alluded to that. I think what is necessary right now is that we have a clear and compelling narrative of commitment from our country, from our partner nations in their capitals, and from the Afghan Government. And that clear and compelling narrative needs to be consistent, and that is something I think we need to work on here over the next couple months to address those issues like the one you referred to with militias.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, General.

Senator McCain

Senator MCCAIN. Mr. Chairman, I would ask the committee's indulgence for Senator Inhofe to make a brief comment. He has responsibilities at the Environment and Public Works Committee. I believe he is going to propose a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. [Laughter.]

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, Senator McCain. I do have to get up to that committee. I do appreciate it.

Let me just ask two short questions, if I might. I want to get on record and agreeing with the comments that Senator McCain made about General Allen.

Second, in response to a written question, General, it said do you agree that following the recovery of 33,000 U.S. surge forces in Afghanistan, further reductions in the U.S. force level should continue at a steady pace through 2014. Your response was I agree that there will be further troop reductions through 2014, but the pace of the withdrawal over the next 25 months will depend on several factors. One of this is the readiness.

Well, we had a hearing on May 10, and you testified at that hearing. I have always considered you to be one of the real top individuals understanding and evaluating training. And you and I have talked about this before, the experiences that we have had in watching the training that is taking place with the Afghan National Security Forces, specifically in the Kabul military training

center, which I have been to several times. I think most of the people on the panel have.

Would you give us kind of an evaluation of the level of training? Because that is what is going to depend on a lot of the rate of withdrawal in my opinion, or it should anyway.

General DUNFORD. Senator, I did have limited opportunity on my recent trip once again to see the training that was ongoing in Afghanistan. I am, as you are, encouraged by what NATO Training Mission, Afghanistan is doing to enhance the training of the Afghan Security Forces. From my perspective, the true test of our training is the performance of the Afghans. As I mentioned a minute ago, I really believe over the last 18 months, their performance has been significantly improved as a result of the training being provided by NTMA.

Senator INHOFE. And I appreciate that.

The second two things I would like just to ask you for the record. One would be, you know, it has been a year now—2011 when the international forces in Afghanistan seized a shipment of 48 122-millimeter rockets from Iran. I think they are still denying that those were Iranian rockets that were sent. And I would like to know for the record the current level of Iranian activity in Afghanistan, and perhaps somebody else will be asking this during the course of this meeting.

And then the questions I asked in my office on the blue-on-green attacks, if you could respond for the record on some of our conversations concerning that and your concern about that for the future. Would you do that for us?

General DUNFORD. I will do that, Senator.

[The information referred to follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Senator INHOFE. All right. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Senator Levin, the chairman, had to leave for a moment. He asked me to go ahead with my questioning.

General Dunford, thanks for your extraordinary record of service and thanks for your willingness to take on this critical leadership position at this really important time.

This hearing happens to take place on the same day that U.S. and Afghan officials are meeting for the first time to begin negotiations for a bilateral security agreement under which we would agree to keep some number of forces and presence associated in Afghanistan after 2014. We spoke about this when you were good enough to visit my office this week, and I would like to give you an opportunity to speak about it here.

It may seem that the immediate decisions about drawdown and support of Afghan National Security Forces are more important. They are very important, but I think there is maybe value to jumping ahead and then coming back because I do think what we begin to do with this bilateral security agreement, whether we will have a presence in Afghanistan after 2014 and what it will be will affect what happens before then.

So let me ask you how important is it in your view for the U.S. to conclude an agreement with the Afghan Government to keep

some military presence, troops, et cetera in Afghanistan after 2014 and why.

General DUNFORD. Senator, thank you.

I think first and foremost a bilateral security agreement will be a clear message of commitment for our long-term strategic partnership. We signed a strategic partnership this past May. A bilateral security agreement will provide the technical details associated with implementing that strategic partnership agreement.

What has been raised on a couple of occasions this morning is the lack of understanding of that commitment, in some cases the lack of confidence that we are committed to the long term. I believe that the bilateral security agreement will create momentum on the strategic side for that narrative I alluded to a minute ago. I think it will be a clear message both of U.S. presence, but I also would expect that our coalition partners, once the bilateral security agreement is signed by the United States, will also look to affect the bilateral security agreement with the Afghans as well.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Let me ask this question. Do you think that signing a bilateral security agreement with the Afghan Government—incidentally, what is your sense of an ideal timeframe during which we would reach an agreement on this bilateral security?

General DUNFORD. Senator, the requirement set forth in the Strategic Partnership Agreement is not more than 1 year. That agreement was signed back in May. So I believe we need to have the bilateral security agreement signed not later than May 2013.

Senator LIEBERMAN. So let us talk about, first, some of the effects of signing that agreement in that timeframe. Do you think it would have any effect on our forces and ISAF forces between now and the end of 2014 if we signed a bilateral security agreement for post-2014?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I believe there would be an effect on our forces indirectly again insofar as it supports that narrative of commitment, which I believe will assist operations being conducted on a day-to-day basis.

Senator LIEBERMAN. So is that a question of the morale of our forces or is it more than that?

General DUNFORD. No, Senator. I think it is a question of confidence in the Afghan people that we will remain, the confidence in the Afghan National Security Forces that we will remain, confidence in the capitals of the coalition that we will remain, and frankly confidence in regional actors as well that we will remain. That is what I believe is the most important effect of the bilateral security agreement is that clear and compelling narrative that not only are we there now, but we intend to see this through till transition in 2014 and we also intend to, in accordance with our agreements in Chicago and Tokyo, see through the decade of transformation that needs to follow in 2014.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Well, that is a really important answer. Let me just draw you out a little bit because I particularly appreciate what you said about the effect that our reaching a bilateral security agreement with the Afghans by May would have on other capitals in the region. And I presume that would begin with Islamabad?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I believe it would have an effect on Islamabad. I think Pakistan hedges its bets based on what they believe are our long-term commitment to the region would be, and their calculus will be changed as a result of their knowing that we are not only going to be there through December 2014, but we will be there beyond 2014 to secure our national objectives.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Right.

What other capitals did you have in mind?

General DUNFORD. The other capitals I had in mind, Senator, first and foremost were the 49 capitals of the coalition.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Right.

General DUNFORD. I also think that the other capitals that have interest are Iran, the Stans, Russian, China, all the countries that have interest in Afghanistan. Their calculus would be affected by our signing a bilateral security agreement, again more importantly signing that agreement reflecting the commitment that was initially made in May 2012.

Senator LIEBERMAN. So I think it is a very important answer. And I have the same feeling. I think Islamabad is the first capital that will be affected by the bilateral security agreement, the whole argument that you referred to, that part of the reason they continue to tie some elements of the Pakistani Government to terrorist groups like Haqqani network and ISI is that they are hedging their bets for what happens the day after we leave. If we are not leaving, presumably they lose that argument.

But every situation is different, but I cannot help but relate this to Iraq. Nobody wanted our discussions with the Iraqi Government for a presence in Iraq after our troops left to fail more than Iran did, and in fact, they were working on that. And the fact that it did fail and we have no continuing presence in Iraq I think is part of the reason why Iran's influence has spread there and so, incidentally, has al Qaeda re-emerged again. So I think those are warnings to us about how important it is to do exactly what you've called for, which is to have a much smaller but a real American presence.

Let me just ask you to talk a bit about—I would assume you do not want to talk numbers of American troops in Afghanistan after 2014. But what are some of the kinds of—besides the psychological effect or the message effect that we have talked about, what are some of the kinds of actual missions that a follow-on U.S. presence would have in Afghanistan after 2014?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I would foresee our two main missions being counterterrorism operations and then advise and assist to the Afghan National Security Forces. I believe that advise and assist role is an enduring role and would extend past December 2014.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thanks, General.

And a final question. Do you think the Afghan Government is favorably inclined toward a bilateral security agreement with us at this time?

General DUNFORD. Senator, my understanding from initial conversations with Ambassador Warlick and with General Allen and the leadership in Kabul is that the Afghan Government is favorably disposed to a bilateral security agreement. Clearly the details

are what are being worked out right now. But both governments have come to the table with terms of reference. Both governments appear to be serious about signing a bilateral security agreement, and I am cautiously optimistic that we will be able to do that in accordance with the timeline.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Well, I thank you very much, and I wish you well. Thank you.

General DUNFORD. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator Lieberman.

Senator McCain.

Senator MCCAIN. General, again, we appreciate your willingness to serve.

I must say, is it not true that you receive daily briefings and visits to Afghanistan keeping up with the situation there?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I have made a recent visit to Afghanistan—

Senator MCCAIN. But you get daily briefings I hope.

General DUNFORD. I do, Senator.

Senator MCCAIN. So you have reached some tentative conclusions.

General DUNFORD. I have, Senator.

Senator MCCAIN. Well, almost every answer you have given is, well, we are going to do studies and assessments. So I hope that you at least have some initial thoughts and impressions as to how we should proceed.

So I guess my first question is do you know what recommendations the command in Afghanistan has made to Washington about the tasks that U.S. forces may be needed to perform beyond 2014. I am specifically talking about force levels, whether they are maintaining at 68,000, whether they should be gradually drawn down, whether they should stay there until 2014. Do you know what those recommendations are?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I have not been included in those conversations.

Senator MCCAIN. That is interesting to me, a guy that is going to take over the command has not even been included in those conversations. Do you feel prepared to assume these responsibilities?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I am prepared to assume these responsibilities.

Senator MCCAIN. You have no impressions or ideas as to whether—on the troop drawdown issue between now and 2014.

General DUNFORD. Senator, I think I have an understanding of the framework within which that decision ought to be made. I have certainly identified what I think are the most important variables that need to be considered but, again, have not been involved in the detailed planning. I would assume—

Senator MCCAIN. So you are a blank slate.

Do you believe that any strategy in Afghanistan can be successful while militants continue to enjoy safe haven in Pakistan?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I think over time a safe haven in Pakistan needs to be addressed.

Senator MCCAIN. Do you believe that the issue of corruption—we can succeed with the level of corruption that exists throughout Afghanistan?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I believe corruption is the most significant strategic challenge to meeting our objectives in Afghanistan.

Senator MCCAIN. So have you got any thoughts about how we would go at this issue of corruption?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I do. I have reviewed the framework within which corruption is being addressed both at the U.S. Central Command, by the U.S. embassy in Kabul, and International Security Force Assistance.

Senator MCCAIN. Do you think that it is succeeding?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I think there has been progress made over the last 18 months and in particular since the Tokyo meeting.

Senator MCCAIN. Do you believe that there has been any progress in the safe haven issue in Pakistan?

General DUNFORD. Senator, it is not apparent to me that there has been any progress with the safe haven issue in Pakistan.

Senator MCCAIN. If confirmed, will you provide this committee with the recommendations that you would ultimately make through your chain of command with regard to the size and pace of the drawdown of U.S. forces from Afghanistan?

General DUNFORD. I would, Senator.

Senator MCCAIN. The reason why I keep raising this issue with you and why I feel so strongly about it is that every time I have been there and had candid conversations with our commanders at literally all levels, they believe that we need to keep the 68,000 there until the 2014 date, and if we start a, quote, steady pace withdrawal, that we will not be able to accomplish a lot of those missions there. If we cannot accomplish the mission, I am not sure why we should stay, and that is something that I think a lot of us have to wrestle with because if we are going to start drawing down right away from the 68,000, which I know that our military leaders believe is absolutely necessary, then I think we need to look at other options.

This attack that destroyed six Harrier aircraft—does that concern you? I am sure it must. I mean, but is that not an example of the brazenness and capabilities that the Taliban have?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I think it does reflect the capabilities the Taliban has.

Senator MCCAIN. And you are confident that the Afghan forces will be able to stand on their own after 2014 without significant assistance from the United States?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I believe that the Afghan National Security Forces are going to require some level of assistance from the United States, as well as coalition partners, in order to be successful post-2014.

Senator MCCAIN. Do you think we are winning the war in Afghanistan?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I think we are making progress, and as I mentioned in my opening remarks, I believe our objectives are achievable.

Senator MCCAIN. Do you have any conclusions that you drew from your recent trip on the security situation in Afghanistan, particularly in southern and eastern Afghanistan?

General DUNFORD. I do, Senator. Broadly speaking, one of the statistics I found compelling is that 80 percent of the violence happens where 20 percent of the population is. Another statistic I found compelling is that 76 percent of the population is currently secured by Afghan National Security Forces. The vast preponderance of violence is now taking place outside of populated areas. The Taliban have been displaced from the population, and I view that as a sign of success.

Senator MCCAIN. Do you believe that al Qaeda is growing stronger in Afghanistan?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I do not believe that al Qaeda is growing stronger, but there is evidence of an al Qaeda presence.

Senator MCCAIN. Does this recent warlord re-arming, Ismail Khan—that is of concern?

General DUNFORD. Senator, it is.

Senator MCCAIN. Well, there are, I guess, three of us here, General, that have been going over there for the last 11 years, and we have not seen the progress that we had hoped would take place, and we do see quite often sentiment on the part of Afghans and their neighbors that the United States spends most of its time announcing withdrawals and dates for withdrawals rather than recipes for success. And some of us, as I say, who have been observing this for a long, long time and made many, many visits and many, many briefings are deeply concerned.

So I hope that you will in your assessment and your ability will take into serious consideration our ability to complete the mission and that is a stable Afghanistan that is able to defend itself over time. And frankly, I am not sure that is the case today and I am not sure that if we start drawing down immediately that we may be able to achieve that goal. We have sacrificed a lot, as you know far better than I do, and we are going to want to have an assessment as to whether this mission can actually succeed or not.

And I thank you for your willingness to serve.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator McCain.

Senator Webb.

Senator WEBB. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to begin by expressing my strong confidence in General Dunford in every sense of the word. I have a tremendous respect for his leadership, for his integrity, and when you look at his bio—I do not think people have really looked at it very closely this morning. They probably have in the past. But the greatest reward in the Marine Corps for leadership is to give someone command. General Dunford has commanded at the platoon level. He has commanded three different times at the company level. He has commanded a battalion. He has commanded a regiment. He was commanding general of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force. And in addition to that, he has a master's in government from Georgetown University and a master's in international relations from the Fletcher School.

I have been privileged to know General Dunford for more than 20 years. I think he is not only well prepared, but he is a person we need over there in this very difficult and complex assignment. He has a sense of duty that I admire. He has a great under-

standing of the role of the military and our governmental process and, as we have seen this morning, has a willingness to provide unambiguous, direct policy advice. That is what we are going to need as we begin to sort out what direction the country should be going in Afghanistan.

General, I would like to take up, first of all, where Senator Lieberman left off in discussing this bilateral security agreement. As you know, the President was over in Afghanistan to sign what they called an enduring strategic partnership agreement. I think a comment that was made at the time was this was a binding agreement.

I have had a problem with the way that we have addressed these long-term agreements beginning with the way that they were reached in Iraq. I think in some ways we are paying the price of the way that the Strategic Framework Agreement was reached in Iraq. I warned at the time that by allowing an executive agreement to determine the long-term national policy, while excluding congressional participation, is really kind of strange in terms of how our governmental systems should be working. The Iraqi Parliament voted on that Strategic Framework Agreement. We did not even have the opportunity to debate it, much less vote on it.

I am informed by my staff that there was a conference call with Senate staff from Admiral Warlick, the Deputy Special Representative, talking about this agreement. His comment was—I am reading from staff notes—that the agreement will contain no binding commitments, and as a result, there is no need to formally bring the document to the Hill. And at the same time, again he says that the Afghani Parliament is going to review and approve the agreement. I think whenever you have an agreement that is going to propel action here in Congress later on, that we really should have direct congressional involvement. This is a clear, long-term message for a relationship between two countries.

So this is not something that is completely in your bailiwick, but I would like to raise it for the concern of my colleagues here. This is something that the Congress should be directly involved in, and if it is not, you are going to see the same kind of problems we have had in Iraq.

You and I discussed a number of times what I mentioned to General Petraeus and Admiral Mullen 4 years ago—almost 4 years ago when we were moving in this escalation in Afghanistan. My great concern was that the success measurement—the metric for success was going to be largely determined by two factors that we really cannot control. One is the validity of the national government, and the second was the growth of a national military and police force to a size that by quantum numbers had never been achieved in Afghanistan's history.

So I would like your thoughts on those two metrics as they affect your responsibilities.

General DUNFORD. Senator, I believe that the most significant strategic event that is going to occur between now and 2014 are the elections in April 2014. Without successful elections in April 2014, I am concerned that the conditional contributions that were pledged in Tokyo and in Chicago both for development and for se-

curity forces will not be there, and those are absolutely critical to our ability to sustain the effort and meet our objectives post-2014.

The other reason those elections are so important is because I think the legitimacy of those elections in the eyes of the Afghan people is going to have a lot to do with their willingness to support the Afghan Government and therefore not support the Taliban.

So I could not agree with you more that the national government, the legitimacy of the national government, and more importantly adequate elections in 2014 are a precondition for our success.

With regard to the Afghan National Security Forces, I do not know what Afghanistan will be able to sustain over time well past 2014. I do believe we can sustain a force of 352,000 through 2014, and I think it is important that we look at sustaining the right level of force post-2014 as well. But at some point when the coalition resources are no longer available in the amount that they will be available in the initial years of the decade of transformation and at some point when the U.S. resources are not available, then I think the Afghan National Security Forces will have to right-size to meet their security requirements within their resources.

Senator WEBB. You know, we tend to characterize the challenge simply as Taliban versus the present government, and yet when I go back to the Bonn agreements where the structure of this present government was agreed to, there was a lot of concern that the structure itself may not fit the history of this country in the longer term. You may end up seeing the need for an actual different structure, a devolution away from a central government before you can have stability.

Do you have any thoughts on that?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I think one of the most important aspects of our endeavor, both on the governance side and security side, is that whatever we come up with has to be sustainable over time. And that clearly will require a uniquely Afghan solution to governance. And so as I look at the election of 2014, our primary role is to provide support to the Afghan National Security Forces as they secure the elections, and our primary role as a government is to support the Afghans as they conduct elections that will be seen as legitimate to Afghans. And so I do believe that the organizational construct of the Afghan Government over time needs to take into account the culture and the requirements and the desires of the Afghan people to be sustainable over time.

Senator WEBB. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator Webb.

Senator Ayotte.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, General Dunford, for your distinguished service to our country, and I appreciate your tremendous qualifications for this position. And certainly I give the best to your family as well.

I just want to ask a very straightforward question which is understandably many of my constituents, Americans, have grown more weary. And what I would like you to tell us is why does the outcome in Afghanistan matter to Americans and what are the consequences of us—if we were to make the decision right now to say we are going to pull out right now. Could you help us with that?

And I just want to understand that because we have made tremendous sacrifices there of our men and women in uniform.

General DUNFORD. Senator, thank you for that question. That is the most important question, I think, of American people and one we should be able to answer very clearly.

In the wake of September 11, we went to Afghanistan because there was sanctuary for al Qaeda and the attacks of September 11 took place in Afghanistan. That area still is ripe for sanctuary for al Qaeda. That region is ripe for sanctuary for al Qaeda. We also wanted to establish a government in Afghanistan and ensure that the Taliban were no longer in a position to harbor al Qaeda in that part of the region. Those objectives remain, that is, to deny al Qaeda sanctuary in Afghanistan and deny the ability of the Taliban to overthrow the government in Afghanistan.

Now the mission is to ensure that those gains that we have made over the last several years, particularly in the area of development of the Afghan National Security Forces and the gains we will make as a result of the elections in 2014 providing enduring government, will ensure the Afghans can do what we have been doing over the past decade.

I would be concerned at this point that if we did not complete the mission—and again, as I mentioned in my opening comments, I believe the objectives are attainable. If we did not complete the mission, we would have an area in Afghanistan where al Qaeda can continue to operate. We would also have a destabilized country on the west side of Pakistan wherein we have significant national interests as well. So I think it would be bad from the perspective of providing sanctuary for al Qaeda and would have a destabilizing effect on the region with, I think, second and third order effects that would be significant and inconsistent with our national interests.

Senator AYOTTE. In looking at the conflict in Iraq and thinking about our failure to be able to negotiate a status of forces agreement there, what lessons do you take from that experience in terms of us being able to negotiate a similar agreement in Afghanistan? And in addition to that, what lessons do you also take from Iraq?

One of the concerns I have on a secondary but equally important issue is when we look at Iraq, for example, we have someone, a detainee, Dakduk, who is a Hezbollah leader who was involved in the murder of five Americans who the Iraqis are going to let go. So we have individuals, do we not, that are in custody in Afghanistan that may be third party nationals, others who are too dangerous to release? And I see that as also an issue that needs to be negotiated going forward to make sure that we are not releasing terrorists back out into the open to then harm us and our allies.

General DUNFORD. Senator, with regard to the first question in terms of lessons learned, I think one of the critical lessons learned is that we need to allow sufficient time for negotiations to be complete. I am encouraged that we have internalized that lesson learned as a result of the Strategic Partnership Agreement that was signed in May that set a timeline for having the bilateral security agreement signed within 1 year. Again, that is May 2013, which is still 6 months ahead of our plan, full transition to Afghan control. So I think in that regard, we have internalized the lesson

learned, and I am optimistic we have the sufficient time to get that agreement signed which is so important. I think our negotiations in Iraq perhaps started later than they have started in Afghanistan.

The other important lesson that we have learned is that the functions that are currently performed by the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan—and there are some 400 different functions—must eventually be sent out to other organizations where those functions can be performed on an enduring basis, that is, those functions that are enduring. And I know right now that there is a detailed effort ongoing in the International Security Assistance Force as well as back here in Washington and in the capitals to identify those various functions and ensure that over the next 25 months we have a logical, responsible, deliberate way of passing those functions off so that we have continuity as we go into the period of transition post-2014.

So I think at the strategic level, those are two of the more important lessons learned, and there is evidence that we have learned those lessons from Iraq's experience.

With regard to the individuals of the ilk that you mentioned that need to be detained, I look at that as first and foremost a force protection issue. There are clearly individuals, al Qaeda and other members of the Haqqani network and some of the more extremists, who are absolutely irreconcilable. And from my perspective those individuals need to remain locked up for the safety and security of our forces as long as we are in Afghanistan and the safety of the American people and their interests after we come out of Afghanistan.

Senator AYOTTE. Are we not still, though, facing a challenge with respect to—the administration has taken the position that we are not going to add anyone else to Guantanamo Bay as to making sure that if those individuals remain in custody in a place like Afghanistan, that we could assure that they would not be released. I mean, I think that is one of the challenges we faced in Iraq. Would you agree?

General DUNFORD. Senator, it was absolutely one of the challenges we faced in Iraq, and I know, at least from the periphery, that the administration is now working on the framework within which that issue can be addressed.

Senator AYOTTE. I think it has to be. We cannot keep releasing people like Dakduk who have the blood of Americans on their hands and clearly are the type of individual that is going to go out and continue to engage in terrorist actions. So I think this is an incredibly important issue in terms of protection of the American people and our allies.

One other final question. The Wartime Contracting Commission found that \$60 billion of U.S. contracting funds had been wasted, misspent, or went in the wrong hands in Iraq and Afghanistan. As a result of that, Senator Brown and I had introduced into the defense authorization bill in 2012 provisions to cut through the red tape so that you could cut off contracts sooner if our taxpayer dollars were getting in the wrong hands or, God forbid, to insurgents, which did happen as well.

How are those provisions working? What more can we do there? Could you give us an update on whether that has been helpful to you?

General DUNFORD. Senator, first, thank you for your assistance in passing that as part of the National Defense Authorization Act last year. And in fact, General Mattis at the U.S. Central Command who has that authority has used that authority a great deal over the past year. In fact, I understand at least \$12 million that might have otherwise gone in the hands of the Taliban did not go into the hands of the Taliban because he had the authority to cancel those contracts because of the association of the contractors with the Taliban.

I also believe that over the past year—and I did spend quite a bit of time on this on my visit—that they have changed the organizational construct at Central Command, at ISAF, and within the Afghan Government, and of course, our embassy lead in Afghanistan to provide better oversight to contracts and ensure that the money that we provide, that the coalition provides, achieves the effect desired in terms of growing the capacity of the Afghans.

So I believe that is a good news story. I think that part of the NDAA in 2012 has allowed us to be more effective on the battlefield, and I know that both General Allen and General Mattis are very appreciative of having that authority and they have used it.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you very much, General. And obviously, if there is anything more that we can do to give you the authority that you need there to make sure that the money does not get into the wrong hands we would look forward to working with you on that. Thank you.

General DUNFORD. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Ayotte.

Senator Begich.

Senator BEGICH. Thank you very much. Thank you for being here this morning. And I want to echo my colleagues' comments that I am looking forward to your appointment and to your new tasks or additional tasks to already your long distinguished career in the military. So thank you for being here this morning.

Let me ask you one. We last week—I think it was last week—over about 100 of our Alaska national guardsmen returned from Kandahar where they had been providing security for the provincial reconstruction team, the 4th Brigade Combat Team, stationed at joint base Elmendorf, and also is now in the process of redeploying to Kandahar. They did a great job, and I think all our folks, our 425, 125, did a fantastic job there.

In your opinion, tell me—and I have heard a little bit about it today, but I want you to expand a little bit more—how do we continue to have the success that I think they did in the work as we start drawing down. Give me your sense as we start drawing down. They have done some great impact over the last year here while they have been deployed. But how do we ensure that as we start drawing down and making sure the Afghan force is ready to lead and take charge? I know it is like repeating what you have been saying, but I just want to expand and hear a little bit more.

General DUNFORD. Senator, to date, the growth of the Afghan National Security Force is, as I think it is fair to say, focused on

quantity. We have grown the force to the size that it is now, again 352,000 that are least recruited and in the process of being trained. I think the focus over the next 25 months has to be addressing the quality of the Afghan National Security Forces. That certainly indicates improvement in literacy. It indicates improvement in leadership. And then there are a number of enablers that need to be grown in order for the Afghan National Security Forces to sustain themselves post-2014. Those include areas like aviation, counter-IED, medical support, fire support, artillery.

I sat through a meeting last week. Deputy Secretary of Defense Carter is personally involved in this. He has a weekly meeting with all the stakeholders to include those that are in Afghanistan to ensure that there are no bureaucratic obstacles to our meeting those requirements over the next 2 years to give the Afghans what they need. But from my perspective, we will continue to address literacy. We will continue to address the institutional requirements for the Afghans to continue to train themselves after we leave to continue to provide professional military education and, as I mentioned, to have those enablers available for them to be able to operate post-2014. That is our primary task post-2014, and I think our presence post-2014 will be informed by the gaps that remain as a result of our efforts in these next 25 months.

Senator BEGICH. Can I expand a little bit on the literacy issue? To me this has been one that I have brought up multiple times here in this meeting. In order for them to have and understand a better enforcement of the rule of law, as well as just managing the forces, can you give me some thought of what you see as how you can improve the literacy rate? We had an advantage in Iraq because the literacy rate was much higher, and then the transition moved in a different way. But in this case, the literacy rate is much lower. Give me a little sense there because I am concerned—and I have said this before, and I appreciate what you said there. Get the quantity first and then now create the higher quality that needs to be sustainable over the long haul. And I am assuming the literacy has to be a critical piece of that. And then how would you step through that?

General DUNFORD. Senator, it is a critical piece, and I am aware that the National Training Mission, Afghanistan now has a literacy program that is integral to our training of the Afghan National Security Forces. That literacy program is down at the lowest tactical level to ensure that all the soldiers are exposed to that and we enhance their literacy. And then it is obviously focused in areas like those units where we will have aviation and fire support where there is a more technical aspect of their performance. So we prioritize and enhance literacy in those areas even greater. I think this is a long-term effort, and if I am confirmed, certainly as I would provide oversight for the Afghan National Security Forces, this would be an area of particular interest.

Senator BEGICH. In regards to the drawdown and the transition, I am a supporter of it. I want it done by 2014.

I also want to say something because I heard a comment earlier. I do not think you are coming in with a blank slate. You have a lot of depth here and a lot of knowledge. You may not have all the details yet of some of the elements, but I think, you know, you do

not earn those stars by just showing up one day. You have spent a lot of years understanding the military operation and what needs to be done in situations like this. That is why we have one of the best and the best and mobile units that can move anywhere.

So let me ask you. Do you think, from the knowledge you have today, you have all the authorities and abilities to ensure that those transfers of power continue as well as movement of equipment out of the country that needs to be done or disposal of equipment, all those pieces that mechanically you will need to make sure that transition occurs properly? Do you think you have all those authorities you need at this point?

General DUNFORD. Senator, my initial assessment is that we do have all the authorities that we need for the retrograde and redeployment piece. I did, among the meetings I sat through during my recent visit, sit through General Allen's staff brief on retrograde and redeployment, and they did not identify any areas where they needed additional authorities. But if I am confirmed, I will certainly come back if I identify gaps in our authorities in order to facilitate a redeployment and retrograde.

And I would note that one significant thing has happened this month on the 2nd of November to assist us in getting our equipment home, integral as part of the campaign, and that was the terms of reference were signed with Pakistan to reopen the ground lines of communication. As you know, that has been a significant problem over the last several months. And I was very encouraged by the signing of that terms of reference and by the pending opening after a proof of concept with the ground lines of communication which will greatly assist in the area that you identified.

Senator BEGICH. Let me ask you. You made a comment and I want to make sure of what I understood this statement was. You said "the decade of transformation." It was a phrase you used. Do you mean as combat forces are out, then the next period of time of transformation, or are you talking about what has occurred and where we are today?

General DUNFORD. Senator, thank you. Thanks for the opportunity to clarify that.

The decade of transformation I referred to was a framework established in Tokyo by our coalition partners and interested nations. That provides the framework for the decade of transformation. It really will begin with the transition that takes place in December 2014. So what I alluded to was a 2014 to a 2024 decade of transformation that would solidify the gains that we have made over the past 10 years and again address the sustainability of governance, security, and development post-2014.

Senator BEGICH. Very good.

My time has expired, but I want to leave you with one thought. I know this probably does not fall because I know how DOD and the military operate. You have kind of certain categories you work within. But in that decade of transformation, has there been some hard numbers attached to that, financial numbers or what the U.S. commitment would be? And if you are unable to answer that—and I recognize that you may not be able to at this point—can you get something for the record at some point of where people are starting

to estimate what that transformation would look like from a U.S. commitment?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I can do that and take that for the record.

Part of it will be the development piece and that really was the Tokyo piece. So as not to be confusing, in Tokyo nations pledged to seek funds from their governments during the decade of transformation. So the commitment was absolutely conditional based on the need of nations to go back to their congress and be resourced. In Chicago, the resources necessary to sustain specifically the security forces were identified.

And so what I can come back to you with for the record is the amount of money that we initially projected would be necessary to sustain the Afghan National Security Forces post-2014 and some sense of who is willing to contribute those resources post-2014.

[The information referred to follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Senator BEGICH. Very good. And that is one part of the equation. We have also the governance, State Department, and so forth, which I can ask that question to them.

General DUNFORD. Thank you, Senator. That is the Tokyo piece. So I will come back to you and address the Chicago piece.

Senator BEGICH. Okay. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator Begich. Senator Collins?

Senator COLLINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General, one of our members this morning encouraged you to always speak truth to power, and I have no doubt that you will do just that because my friend and colleague, Senator Joe Lieberman, told me that when you visited him in his office, he asked you what baseball team you supported. And of course, Joe is a confirmed, misguided Yankees fan, and you admitted freely that you were a Red Sox fan. So I think that was a great example of speaking truth to power. And I, of course, commend you on your choice of baseball teams even though it was a rough season for the Red Sox.

I do want to turn to, obviously, more serious issues today. General, twice you have stated this morning that you believe that our objectives in Afghanistan are achievable. And, of course, the primary objective in Afghanistan since 2009 has been to disrupt, dismantle, and eventually defeat al Qaeda in the region and to prevent its return to either Afghanistan or Pakistan. Yet, national intelligence estimates, reports from the International Crisis Group, and the special investigation for Afghanistan reconstruction have cast doubts on the ability of the Afghan National Security Forces to consolidate and hold the gains in security that have been made in Afghanistan over the past decade at great cost and treasure to our country and others. These reports also cast doubt on the likelihood of the Afghan Government providing good governance and dealing with endemic corruption such that it would enable the ANSF to do its job in fighting the insurgency.

Given the escalation of insider attacks, the sanctuaries that still exist in Pakistan and the level of corruption in the Afghan Government, why do you believe that the objectives are indeed attainable?

It seems to me that the intelligence reports, the lack of progress, the surge in insider attacks paint a very bleak picture.

General DUNFORD. Senator, actually thank you for asking that question and giving me an opportunity to put what I believe to be those reports in perspective. Here is what my confidence is based on in terms of reaching our objectives specifically with regard to the Afghan National Security Forces.

As you know, five tranches of transition were identified. Five geographical areas were identified to be transitioned to Afghan security control. We have initiated the transition in three of those five. In the three first tranches that we transitioned over to the Afghan National Security Forces, violence has actually decreased. And I think it is very important to recognize that the violence that is taking place today is largely outside of the populated areas because the Afghan National Security Forces have secured the populated areas.

The other reason why I am optimistic is, again, when I look at the Afghan National Security Forces and where they were in 2008 when I first observed them and where they are today in 2012, it is a dramatic improvement. And so as I look forward over the next 24 or 25 months, if we maintain the trajectory that we have had over the past several years into the next 25 months, I believe the Afghan National Security Forces will be capable of providing security.

And I think it is important to look at that in relationship to key milestones. This summer we will go to milestone 2013, and at that point all five geographical areas I mentioned will be in transition. So the Afghans will be completely in the lead at that point. Given what I project to be our coalition and U.S. support in the summer of 2013, I am confident in the ability of the Afghan National Security Forces to secure those five geographical areas. They will still need in some cases our combat operations to take place. They will absolutely need us to provide enabling support, and we will also still be doing the advise/assist mission as we transition to a largely advise/assist mission in 2013.

The next major event is the elections in 2014. And again, when I look at the Afghan capability, combined with what I believe to be the resources that we will provide and I look at where the Taliban is at this particular time and where they will be in 2014, I project the Afghans will be able to provide security at that time as well.

I think in addition to looking at the level of violence and where it is occurring largely outside those populated areas, it is also important to note that the Taliban has had significant leadership losses over the last 2 years. The average age of a Taliban leader now is probably 10 years younger than it was when the war started 10 years ago. They have had significant attrition. Our Special Operations Forces and our conventional operations have significantly attritted Taliban leadership. We also see indications of Taliban suffering financial difficulties and being unable to sustain their effort, and they clearly did not achieve their objectives in their campaign during 2012.

So, Senator, I do not, for a minute, understate the challenges associated with this endeavor. I recognize what has to happen between now and 2014 to continue to solidify the gains we have made

with the Afghan National Security Forces and make those sustainable. And I also recognize that we need to provide some support to them post-2014. But the important thing is to look at the relative capabilities of the insurgents versus the relative capabilities of the Afghan National Security Forces with that support we are going to provide, and to that extent, I believe we will meet our objectives and the Afghans will be able to sustain that level of security that we achieve in December 2014.

Senator COLLINS. Well, General, you mentioned that the overall level of violence in Afghanistan has declined. And I wonder, Mr. Chairman, if we could ask for some statistics on that. I have read an alternative analysis that suggests that the surge has not been successful in eastern Afghanistan and that the level of violence in that part of the country has actually increased. Now, I understand when you have a surge, you are going to have an increase in violence just because there is more combat, more fighting. But at this stage, I think it would be helpful for us to have a measure of the effectiveness of the surge in reducing violence particularly to the civilian population. And I would hope that the chairman would ask for that information.

And finally, let me just—

Chairman LEVIN. Let me just respond to that request because I have asked for it, and I actually looked at it this morning. And it is really interesting, and I think it very much supports General Dunford. But, nonetheless, I asked for it to be updated. It is a month behind. And we can now get the October and we will be able to get the November results so we can compare apples and apples this year to last year. It is a very important request you are making and I hope that by the end of next week we would have those statistics updated and I will make them available to everybody.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you. That will be very helpful.

Just quickly. I know my time has expired. I just have to express my deep concern about the escalation in green on blue attacks. I know that you have said that each death has strategic implications and I know that you recognize that these attacks also are absolutely devastating to the families of American service members since they are trying to train and help these Afghan forces, and then to be killed by them is just devastating. And I think that these attacks also are jeopardizing the willingness of our partners to continue their own missions in Afghanistan. So I guess for the record I would ask, since my time has expired, whether you think this escalation threatens the ability for us to continue training and equipping the Afghan forces and eventually turning over the authority to them.

Chairman LEVIN. I think if you could give a brief answer to that instead of leaving it for the record.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. It is such an important answer. I think our colleagues would understand that.

General DUNFORD. Mr. Chairman, I would be glad to. Thank you, Senator.

First and foremost, the insider threat is a force protection issue, and as such, if I am confirmed as the Commander, I can assure you, Senator, I will be personally and decisively engaged on the

issue of insider threat. I have had an opportunity to take a look at what ISAF has done under General Allen's leadership to address the insider threat. I have been impressed by the comprehensive approach to the insider threat that has been taken both at home station in terms of enhanced training and training that takes place once we are inside of Afghanistan.

There has also been a significant increase in the number of counterintelligence resources being provided in Afghanistan, both inside the coalition, as well as inside the Afghan National Security Forces.

Perhaps what is most encouraging to me—and it perhaps is too early to see if it is the result of our success, but we have had a reduction in insider threats over the last couple months as we have implemented these new measures. But what is most revealing to me is that the Afghans—clearly the Afghan leadership takes this issue seriously. I had an opportunity to sit through what General Allen calls the campaign synchronization conference during my recent visit. The minister of interior, the minister of defense, and all of the corps commanders and their subordinate leadership were there. The Afghans recognize this for the threat that it is.

And you asked what my perception of the threat is. In addition to being a force protection issue, it clearly is an issue that could undermine the trust which is the foundation of our relationship with the Afghans, and it could also affect the will of the coalition at the strategic level to stay there.

So I could not agree with you more, Senator. It is a critical issue. It is an issue that needs to be addressed. I do not think it is ever solved. I do not think we should ever be complacent and think we have solved it. We need to stay out in front of the enemy. And we know we have an adaptive thinking enemy, and as we make adjustments, as General Allen has, the enemy will also adjust and we need to stay out in front of that. But, again, I can assure you that if I am confirmed, that issue will be at the top of my in-box and I will be personally and decisively engaged in assuring that we address it properly.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you, General.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Collins.

Senator Udall.

Senator UDALL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, General. Let me just start by acknowledging your service. You have served with great distinction and selflessness for many years. I know everybody on the committee wants to acknowledge your service.

I also know your family has been an important part of your service, and they have sacrificed as much as you have. I want to extend my gratitude to your family as well.

Here you sit, having carried a load much more than your fair share these last years and you are preparing to do even more. So we look forward to seeing you in theater as we discussed yesterday when you came by to visit me, and I just want to let you know you have my deepest thanks for your service.

Let me, if I might, move to an insight you might be able to provide us based on your service in Iraq. Afghan and Iraqi cultures

are different, and the nature of those two wars were different in some respects. But I know there are some lessons that you learned in Iraq, and I would like to hear what you learned and how that might guide you as the COMISAF over the next 2 years.

General DUNFORD. Senator, thank you for that question. I think the first thing we all recognize is that the defeat mechanism for the insurgency is going to be capable security forces indigenous. And I think of all the lessons that we learned in Iraq. The successes that we had in Iraq were a result of our effort to stand up capable Iraqi security forces, and we certainly saw that that is what happened in Anbar Province. That is what happened in Baghdad, and that is what happened in the other areas of violence in Iraq. As we were able to grow capabilities with Iraqi security forces and provide them with the requisite level of support, they were able to take the fight to the enemy, and from my perspective that capability that the Iraqis had is what was the defeat mechanism for the insurgency in Iraq.

I think similarly what we take to Afghanistan is a recognition that the critical part of our effort in Afghanistan over the next 2 years is to continue our efforts to develop the capabilities of the Afghan National Security Forces. Those indigenous forces will be the forces that allow us to be successful in Afghanistan. Those forces are the ones that will allow our success to be enduring. So I think at the strategic level that is absolutely the thing that is similar from Iraq to Afghanistan and one we ought not to lose focus on.

Senator UDALL. Let me pick up on that line of testimony and turn to the ALP. When I was last in Afghanistan with Senator Jack Reed last October, that was a real focus of General Allen and a number of his subordinate commanders. And there were some positive signs. ALP forces are locals. They are, therefore, more trusted by villagers and community elders.

Do you support the continuation of the ALP program, and are there lessons learned there that we could incorporate into other ANSF organizations?

General DUNFORD. Senator, thank you for that question.

I absolutely support the continuation of the Afghan local police, and I think what our Special Operations Forces have done in establishing village support operations in Afghan Local Police has been one of the success stories over the last 18 months. But perhaps it is better for me to share with you the perspective of the Afghans and the perspective of Taliban on the ALP to make that point.

I did sit through, as I mentioned a minute ago, the synchronization conference of Afghan leadership. And as you might recall, when the ALP was first introduced, there was some resistance amongst the Afghans to implementing that program. The only issue that the Afghan leadership had about the Afghan Local Police during the recent security synchronization conference was how much faster can we meet the full task keel or authorized level of Afghan Local Police. There are about 16,000 fielded right now and there is a full authorization level of 30,000. So from the perspective of the Afghans, they very much recognize that this local solution to security, completely linked to local leadership and under the supervision of district police, is an absolutely successful program.

But what is most interesting is the Taliban's perspective of the Afghan Local Police. In the Taliban view, the Afghan Local Police is one of the most significant issues that they have to address in order to be successful. They believe that as more Afghan Local Police is fielded and more areas come under Afghan Local Police provided with the windbreak that the ANA and the ANP provide—they view that as a very concerning development.

So I think both General Allen and ISAF view ALP as a successful program. I certainly, if confirmed, would intend on continuing that program. But, again, as importantly, when you look at it through the lens of the Afghans and the lens of the Taliban, I think you get some sense for how important that program has been and how successful it has been and how much it can help us meet our objectives in 2014.

Senator UDALL. Mr. Chairman, I have been in and out of the hearing this morning. It is a busy day on the Hill. I do not know if anybody, General, had asked you about sequestration and the effect it would have on our plans in Afghanistan. I might ask if you would submit for the record any thoughts you have on sequestration. As important as that is, if you would do that, that would be helpful to the committee.

General DUNFORD. Senator, do you want me to answer now?

Senator UDALL. If you would submit something to the record because I want to move to another question.

General DUNFORD. I will do that, Senator.

Senator UDALL. Because I know we are all very concerned about sequestration.

[The information referred to follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Senator UDALL. You mentioned some of the capitals you are watching closely, and I would like to ask you about one more and that is Delhi. I know you are going to be commuting—or not commuting, but you will make some periodic trips, I am sure, to Islamabad. We talked about that yesterday.

Do you think there is any hope of engaging New Delhi in working towards a resolution of that relationship between Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India in ways that might reassure Pakistan?

General DUNFORD. Senator, at this point I do not have insight into what our Government is doing to try to work the very delicate relationship between Pakistan and India. I am certainly aware that that is going to be critical to regional stability in the long term and our success in Afghanistan. And if confirmed, I suspect that I will be involved in that issue and have an opportunity to provide some military advice as our civilian leadership works through the diplomatic piece.

Senator UDALL. Speak to the announcement that Pakistan is going to release several low-level Taliban prisoners at the request of the Afghan Government. Do you think that this suggests we could work towards a negotiated settlement, or do you think that there is just really no path to deal between the Afghan Government and the Taliban without Pakistan?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I would absolutely support any initiative that would bring a political resolution to the conflict in Afghanistan, and I know Ambassador Grossman, our special rep-

representative, is working very hard to effect some reconciliation working with the Afghan Government and other interested partner nations. If confirmed, I would be absolutely supportive of that and do what I can from a military perspective to support Ambassador Grossman's efforts for reconciliation.

I do not, at this time, have a sense for the probability of reconciliation in the near term but, again, would look forward to supporting Ambassador Grossman as he tries to lead our Government in effecting some type of reconciliation.

Senator UDALL. General, again thank you for your service. I look forward to seeing you in theater over the next 2 years as we bring this war to a successful conclusion under your leadership. Thank you.

General DUNFORD. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Udall.

Senator Graham.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to associate myself with Senator McCain's comments about General Allen.

General Dunford, thank you for being willing to serve.

Chairman Levin and I will get back with the administration and certainly consult with you about our desire to make sure that we understand the value of a 352,000 Afghan army for some time to come and the cost/benefit analysis. The more they can do and the more they have, the less they will need us. So, Senator Levin, I associate myself with that inquiry.

General Dunford, I believe Afghanistan is salvageable, but if we do not do some things differently, it will not be successful.

Trip wires. Do you agree with me if the 2014 elections in Afghanistan go poorly, then that would be a major setback for the future of Afghanistan?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I could not agree more. I do believe that the elections are critical. They are critical for two reasons. One is that the pledges that were made in Tokyo and Chicago are conditional, and part of those conditions involve addressing the issue of corruption and having successful elections in 2014.

I also think in order for us to give confidence to the Afghan National Security Forces and the Afghan people, legitimate governance must need to be established. Over the last several years, I think it is fair to say that security has enabled the development of governance. I think it is also fair to say that over the next couple years effective governance is going to be necessary to make the gains that we have made in security enduring.

Senator GRAHAM. President Karzai has indicated to me and I think others that he intends not to run. I think that would be a good decision for the future of Afghanistan. And I would just like to say if for some reason he changed his mind and tried to seek another term, that would be absolutely devastating in my view for the future of Afghanistan.

Now, the last card to play by the United States, would you agree with me, is the Security Partnership Agreement being implemented effectively, robustly, and that the bilateral security agreement is really the last card to play in terms of maintaining a bright future for Afghanistan?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I would agree with that. I think the bilateral security agreement, which is a logical extension of the Security Partnership Agreement, is what will make the gains that we have in Afghanistan—

Senator GRAHAM. It is the difference between winning and losing.

General DUNFORD. I believe so, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. So we would need, in your view—militarily they do not have much of an air force. It would be smart to have some F-16s over there for a while past 2014?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I think we are going to have to address a number of areas that are going to be capability—

Senator GRAHAM. Let us talk about air power. Would you think air power by American—

General DUNFORD. Yes, Senator. Air power is important.

Senator GRAHAM. Because they do not have an air force that could do that.

Attack helicopters. That makes some sense. Right?

General DUNFORD. It makes sense, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Counterterrorism is an insurance policy for America to make sure the Taliban never come back and al Qaeda does not regroup. Right?

General DUNFORD. It is, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Intel capability. How many drones does the Afghan army have?

General DUNFORD. They do not have any at this time that I am aware of, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. The intel capability of the Afghan Security Forces is basically more human than it is technical and all the technical, gee-whiz stuff in Afghanistan we own. Is that correct?

General DUNFORD. To my knowledge, it is, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Did you serve in Iraq?

General DUNFORD. I did, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Would you do me a personal favor if you can find time in your busy schedule? Before you make any decisions about what to recommend to the President or this body, take a visit to Iraq and see how the place is playing out.

General DUNFORD. I will, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Because I want you to go because you and others fought so hard and it is coming apart and I do not want that to happen to Afghanistan.

Do you agree with me that you could maintain a robust American military presence in Afghanistan post-2014 with a fraction of the troops we have today?

General DUNFORD. Absolutely, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Less than we have had in Korea for decades.

General DUNFORD. I believe that is the case, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. A thousand would not be enough, would it?

General DUNFORD. I do not believe 1,000 would be enough, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. So we are going to let you figure that out. I know you will advise us wisely.

Now, about those troops, would you agree with me that it would be ill-advised to leave one American military member in Afghani-

stan post-2014 without a status of forces agreement giving them legal protections against Afghan prosecutions?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I think we would need full protection for those in uniform. I think we would also need to have appropriate protections for those civilians from our Government that are working over there.

Senator GRAHAM. To our Afghan partners, that has been the norm in our Nation's history and all other wars and conflicts. Is that correct?

General DUNFORD. It has, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Particularly when you have unstable governments and people are still shooting at our troops.

General DUNFORD. That is correct, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. And I have learned a lot about the Afghan legal system. It is fair to say it has a ways to go, but our hope springs eternal.

So I just want to let the committee know as much as I want to get it right in Afghanistan and believe losing would be a national security disaster for the ages, if the Afghans insist on keeping American soldiers in Afghanistan without legal protections as we have afforded our troops throughout the world, I will not vote for one penny and this war will come to an end. Do you think that would be a reasonable approach?

General DUNFORD. I understand that, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Could you communicate that?

Now, how can you—are you familiar with the detainee problem we have in Afghanistan?

General DUNFORD. I am, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. I want to compliment General Huber and the 435 Task Force because that is where I do my Reserve duty. They have done a heck of a job in spite of me. And we are in the position now in the transition phase of taking 3,000-plus law of war captures that the American military and coalition forces have captured that have been in our detention system and transitioning to Afghan detention. Are you aware of that?

General DUNFORD. I am, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. From my point of view, it is going rather well, but there are some major problems that I see in the future. One of these problems is the unwillingness of the Afghan Government to embrace administrative detention. Are you aware of what I am talking about?

General DUNFORD. I am aware of what you are talking about, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Are you aware of the fact that if you had to use the Afghan criminal code to prosecute most people in our custody, it would be almost impossible in many of the cases?

General DUNFORD. I am, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you understand that the Afghan criminal code really does not recognize the difference between a common criminal and an insurgent?

General DUNFORD. I do, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Would you do everything in your power to influence the Afghans to tell them that administrative detention, similar to what we do under the Geneva Convention, should be

continued? And would you please let them know that if I see an effort to undercut administrative detention and this becomes a catch-and-release program, none of us are going to stand for one person who has been caught three or four times by American forces going back to the battlefield killing Americans again, that we want them to be in the lead, we respect their sovereignty, but they have to embrace the fact that they are fighting an insurgency? Would you pass that on?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I would. And I will just comment that that is to me, first and foremost, not a legal issue but a force protection issue. So we absolutely have to find a way to keep those individuals off the battlefield while we are there.

Senator GRAHAM. And my last question. My time is up. Is it possible at all to lose in Afghanistan and it not be catastrophic to the future of Pakistan?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I believe that an unstable Afghanistan would be a significant risk to the stability of Pakistan.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Graham.

Senator Reed.

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

And thank you, General, for your service and the service of your family to the United States and to the Marine Corps. And I think the President has made a very wise nomination. You have got one of the most difficult jobs ahead of you. It is being admirably performed now by General Allen. And I have every confidence you will continue in that tradition of leadership from the front.

A couple of issues. The plan is in terms of transition—one of the major aspects of it is the security forces assistance teams that would be NATO teams that would be at the brigade level and operating with Afghan forces to be the enablers, the coordinators, and in effect the trainers. Can you comment upon the progress to date of forming these teams and also the issue that we had a chance to talk about which has potential huge consequences of the blue on green incidents with respect to being able to keep these teams at the brigade level or lower?

General DUNFORD. Senator, we have started to field the security force assistance teams. And in fact, my understanding is the first brigade level security force assistance organization is currently deploying at this time. And so it is well along the way. And the teams that we have established really all over all of the regional commands are in place and effective. And I think that absolutely the next logical step after partnering is to migrate to the security force assistance teams as we move towards that long-term enduring relationship.

With regard to the insider threat, the initial data that I have had an opportunity to look at would certainly indicate that the closer we are to our Afghan partners, the safer we are, and there have been very few incidents of the insider threat associated with units that are very closely tied in the manner that the security force assistance teams would. The units that have had difficulty are ones that perhaps have more episodic involvement than we would have with security force assistance teams. So I am optimistic that in addition to the other steps that are being taken with the insider threat, that the security force assistance team construct will actu-

ally be effective and be a mitigator, in fact, for the insider threat. Again, the data that we have is minimal, but that is my initial assessment. And if confirmed, I will certainly pay close attention to that, but my perspective right now is that the security force assistance teams are not only the right mechanism for us to take the Afghans to the next level, but they also are a mitigator for the insider threat that you talked about.

Senator REED. One of the points that you have already made in your testimony is that the Afghan National Army has made some significant progress particularly in the last several years with the training effort that has been led. The police lag behind in terms of capability, coherence, and lacking a judicial system, as Senator Graham pointed out, even a sort of governmental infrastructure. So that going forward the strongest link is the Afghan National Army.

Are you conscious of or sensitive to ethnic divisions within that force since ethnic divisions seem to characterize the country? There are always rumors of political leaders in certain towns with their own sort of paramilitary aspirations. So can you comment again about sort of the stability of the force and the coherence of the force as a national army, not sort of the ethnic divisions?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I can comment in general terms on that. One, I am aware of those concerns and I know that General Allen and his team are very sensitive to that and have worked with the Afghans to ensure that both the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police reflect the demographic mix of Afghanistan. We think that is important. The army has to be a reflection of the Nation and not a reflection of one particular ethnic group that will set the conditions for challenges down the road. So I know they are paying particular attention to that right now, and that is certainly, if confirmed, an area that I would pay particular attention to as well.

Senator REED. One of the major missions you will have as the NATO Commander is to not only make the transition but also to supervise the retrograde of huge amounts of materiel, equipment that are there. The principal route of entry was through Pakistan and I presume the principal route of exit would be through Pakistan. You have mentioned but can you comment further on where you see us in terms of being able to conduct successfully those operations and get our materiel out?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I can. Absolutely the ground lines of communication through Pakistan are the most efficient, the most inexpensive way for us to get our equipment home. There are other ways to get it home, and we have been doing that over time, but it is far more expensive to do air and multimodal transportation of that equipment back home.

I am encouraged that the terms of reference were signed by Pakistan on the 2nd of this month, November. We are now moving into a proof-of-concept phase so we can reopen those lines of communication. But much of what we call frustrated cargo, those items that have been sitting for a while, have started to move and so forth. So I believe right now the situation is actually pretty good.

Senator REED. And you are well on your way or the command is well on its way through the planning of the movement of this

equipment. You have identified the equipment that is leaving, the equipment that is staying. All that is going on as we speak.

General DUNFORD. Senator, it is. And I left with a lot of confidence about that. During my last visit, I did have a chance to spend time with U.S. Forces, Afghanistan and the leadership that is overseeing that. And then on the visit before this last visit, I had a chance to visit what they call the sort lots where all the equipment is being staged and brought out. And I think that it is being done now, most importantly, as an integral part of the campaign. It is not just about getting our equipment out. It is not just about moving it across the ground lines of communication. It is about doing our retrograde and redeployment consistent with our campaign objectives. And my perspective is that that concept is very well understood within ISAF and within U.S. Forces, Afghanistan and they are well ahead of where they need to be in terms of meeting their objectives.

Senator REED. You are the NATO Commander. I know you have been on the ground in Afghanistan. Have you had any contact with other NATO commanders and leadership in NATO in preparation?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I have. I was able to accompany Secretary Panetta to the recent defense ministerial for a couple days. I sat through the bilateral discussions that we had with our NATO partners, as well as the general session with the defense ministers, and then on the sideline I had a chance to meet many of the NATO leaders. If confirmed, one of the things I will certainly do before assuming command is to visit the key capitals of our NATO partners and establish the personal relationships that I know will be so important in our success over the next couple years.

Senator REED. Thank you, sir.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Reed.

Senator Sessions.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you, General Dunford, for your leadership and service. We appreciate that and your courage and willingness to go in harm's way to serve intensely for your leadership tour in Afghanistan.

You and I talked yesterday. I appreciated—yesterday or the day before? And I enjoyed that conversation. I believe that you will be honest with us.

I asked you then and let me ask you today. Do you believe there is a reasonable prospect for the United States to being able to be successful in Afghanistan? And by that, I mean the definition you have given earlier today. What kind of prospects do we have of being able to depart from Afghanistan having successfully completed a mission there?

General DUNFORD. Senator, when I look clearly at our objectives and I look at the campaign plan that is in place right now and the progress that has been made to date, I am optimistic that with continued commitment we can meet our objectives.

Senator SESSIONS. And if that were to change, will you report that to the Congress as well as to the commander in chief?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I not only will, but I will feel compelled to report that.

Senator SESSIONS. Well, we need to have that.

Are you familiar with the article in the February 2012 Armed Forces Journal written by Colonel Daniel Davis expressing his concern about the performance of the Afghan National Army?

General DUNFORD. I believe I am if that is a lieutenant colonel National Guard officer, Senator Sessions.

Senator SESSIONS. Yes.

Well, it is troubling. I have heard similar stories from other enlisted personnel who deal on a regular basis with their counterparts in the Afghan army.

Will you commit to going below just the top commanders when you discuss the condition of the forces there? Will you talk to enlisted personnel, as well as junior officers, who are personally engaged and working with our allies in this effort? And will you be prepared to adjust your thinking about how well this effort is going if reality tells you it is not going as well as we have been hearing?

General DUNFORD. Senator, if I am confirmed, I recognize that any success I am going to have as a leader is going to be based on my willingness to listen to the people that are actually out there doing the work every day. And so I absolutely will pledge to you that I will get out and about. I will make sure that I understand the challenges and the opportunities from the perspective of the young marines, soldiers, sailors, and airmen that are actually out there doing the work. And as I mentioned, I think my ability and willingness to do that is going to be all to do with any success that we have.

Senator SESSIONS. I really believe you have to do that. Of course, I am well aware that you can be in one area of the country and get one perspective and a different perspective in another area. But this individual traveled 9,000 miles in more than eight provinces meeting and dealing with these issues on a regular basis, and it was a very troubling report, I got to tell you. I think it sounded—explicit stories or vignettes of events that occurred that give insight into an Afghan army that is not yet where we need it to be.

Let me join in support of Senator Graham in his view about prisoners and detaining people who are threats to our force. It is true in third world countries that they have a very difficult time maintaining people in prison for any long period of time. People who are direct threats to the United States I believe should be held in U.S. custody, and it is surprising to me that we cannot work out an arrangement where Afghanistan would be happy that we pay for the cost to maintain the security on dangerous threats to their country.

Will you be active in ensuring that we do not have, as Senator Graham said, a revolving door, that prisoners that have been detained are not released so they can attack us or Afghan civilians and military?

General DUNFORD. Senator, if I am confirmed, I absolutely will be personally engaged in that issue, and I do view it as a critical force protection issue. That issue has to be addressed in order for us to be successful in the mission.

Senator SESSIONS. Well, it is more difficult than a lot of people think because I have watched it closely. Senator Graham as a reservist has been over there personally engaged in it. I have been asking about it for over a decade, and I am just telling you it is not easy. It will be hard to deal with that question.

General Dunford, let me ask a little bit about Defense Department policy. There is an interesting article Deb Riechmann in the Associated Press just 2 days ago noting that you would represent the 15th top commander in Afghanistan since 2002 and referred to it as a revolving door of generals that some experts say is detrimental to the war effort.

How much personal time have you had in Afghanistan?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I have not served in an assignment in Afghanistan. I have served as the component commander of the Marine Forces, Central. I was Marine Forces Central Command and component commander in Central Command for marines, had responsibility for all the marines that were assigned to Iraq and Afghanistan at that time. That was 2010. Had responsibility for the buildup of forces in Afghanistan and the retrograde of forces from Iraq. Since 2008, in all the assignments I have had since 2008, I have had occasion to regularly visit Afghanistan and then back here in Washington, as well as my assignment at the U.S. Central Command, be involved in issues associated with our operations in Afghanistan.

Senator SESSIONS. Well, it is a very difficult thing to take any American military person away from their families and be stationed at a total—work every hour you can possibly work with soldiers' lives. And it is stressful and I know that it can wear people down over time. But I do think we ought to think about this, Mr. Chairman.

According to the article, rotating top commanders on an annual basis makes no management sense. Close quote.

Thomas Ricks, a senior fellow at the Center for New American Security wrote an opinion piece Sunday in the New York Times. "Imagine trying to run a corporation by swapping the senior executives every year or imagine if, at the beginning of 1944, 6 months before D-Day, General Marshall, the Army Chief of Staff, told General Eisenhower, the Supreme Commander, that it was time to give someone else a chance to lead."

So I am a bit concerned when we have life and death situations going on that we have had 15 commanders in what—this 10- or 11-year effort.

Do you have any concern about that? And what would you do to undertake to overcome—to maintain a secure transition?

General DUNFORD. Senator, what I can tell you is that I have told the chairman, Chairman Dempsey, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and the Secretary of Defense as the process went on for my nomination that I had a willingness to serve until they thought it was appropriate for me to come home. I recognize the need for continuity and stability of leadership, particularly at this particular critical time, and if I am confirmed, I am willing to provide that.

Senator SESSIONS. Well, thank you because I know that can be stressful, but we also need to provide our commanders who have longer tours the opportunity to be with their families and to get some time away from the stress of combat. Thank you for that commitment and your willingness to serve.

I am uneasy about the situation. We have invested a great deal. We do not need to muff it up here at the end when it could be suc-

cessful and where a little different tactic, a little different policy could allow us to be successful.

And would you be frank with the Secretary of Defense and the President and the Congress if you see needs that would make a big difference in the success or failure of our effort? Would you bring that and fight for that and advocate for changes that may make a difference in the course of this long war?

General DUNFORD. I will, Senator.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator Sessions.

The issue you raise about the frequent change in leadership is kind of a fundamental question which I think probably needs to be raised with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense when they are in front of us because it is a very significant issue. Thank you.

Senator McCaskill.

Senator MCCASKILL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, General Dunford, for your special service to our Nation.

I would ask you. Have you had a chance, pending this confirmation, to personally review the reports of SIGAR that have been issued over the last 12 months?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I have had an opportunity to review the reports.

Senator MCCASKILL. I am a broken record on this, but I have become beyond a skeptic about the part of the COIN strategy, the counter-insurgency strategy, that out of thin air decided that part of an effective COIN strategy was building infrastructure in a non-secure environment. And we did \$62 billion in Iraq. If you have not had a chance to read the final assessment of SIGAR on the infrastructure building that occurred in Iraq, it is heartbreaking. The facilities that are standing empty, to say nothing of all the things we built with those taxpayer dollars that were blown up, to say nothing of the projects that are crumbled and in ruins because of, frankly, an inability to maintain or sustain what we built. And we are about ready to have a report like that I believe in Afghanistan.

I cannot get anyone to give me any data points that support the notion that the Department of Defense and even the State Department undergoing massive infrastructure projects while we are trying to train an army, establish a police force and a rule of law, have contributed to our success in theater. And I would like your comments on that.

General DUNFORD. Senator, if I am confirmed, I recognize that an important part of my responsibilities will be to be a good steward of our resources. During a recent visit, I discussed this issue with General Allen. I know that he has personally, over the last 18 months, begun to review every single project to ensure it achieved the desired effect in support of the campaign. I am also aware that he has canceled millions of dollars of projects that did not meet the criteria that he felt needed to be met in order to support the campaign. So what I can pledge to you, Senator, is that I will look at that issue with a matter of great importance. I do recognize it is important.

Corruption is important. It is associated with some of the money that we are spending there as well, and I have identified corruption in my initial assessment as certainly one of the most strategic challenges and risks that we have in effecting a positive outcome in the campaign.

Senator MCCASKILL. Maintaining and sustaining was part of the problem. The other problem is it is clear that we funded our enemies in some instances, which is unacceptable.

Let me tell you one of my problems. I would love to see the list of what has been canceled, particularly major power/water projects which are a significant part. We know that some of the projects that are being built right now are not going to be completed until next year. So one of the things I am frustrated about, even though I have tried numerous times to get specifics on this—the fiscal year 2013 money that—admittedly we have cut the money for both SERP and for Afghanistan infrastructure fund. But the fiscal year 2013 projects still are not delineated. Now, we are told this is because this is an agreement that happens between State and Defense. But if they have not been delineated yet—the projects we funded 2 years ago are not completed—I really need to be reassured that come 2014 we do not once again have a situation where we are withdrawing our troops but we are leaving billions of dollars of contract work on the ground for infrastructure, particularly in light of what the needs are in this country.

So I would look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible what the fiscal year 2013 projects are and on what basis they were decided, and is there any discussion about whether or not they are necessary. Sometimes there is a tendency to just keep doing it because we have been doing it, and I really think it is time for you all to do a gut check on COIN as it relates to nation building. I mean, we can call it other things, but let us be honest. We are trying to nation build in the middle of fighting. That is really hard. I do not want us to keep going forward without really doing an introspective look at how successful this part of the COIN strategy has been. And I do not think anybody has, at least to point, shown me a proof point that that part of the COIN strategy can be chalked up as a success. And I would look forward to any information that you or your team could give me on that.

Specifically I also want to talk about the security force facilities, and I want to know what our price tag is going forward, if you can get it to me for the record. We know \$11.7 billion has been spent to construct the Afghan National Security Forces facilities. That is almost \$12 billion we have spent. We know that SIGAR in October issued the report that said that the Afghan-led sustainment—they cannot afford these facilities. I know that we are going to have to give them money. I believe the figure for the first year is \$800 million just to sustain and maintain these facilities.

What is the price tag going forward indefinitely to maintain and sustain these security facilities we have built for them? As I said before in these hearings, we built an army for them they cannot afford, and what is the price tag for the United States to sustain this for the next decade?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I would have to take that for the record.

[The information referred to follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Senator MCCASKILL. It is an important one for us to understand as we all are trying to figure out how we manage the money. I want to make sure that the American people know and that we know what we are going to be called upon to fund for them going forward from 2014 to maintain not the personnel, which is a huge price tag, but the actual facilities themselves. So if you would work on that for the record, and we would certainly like anybody on your team to visit with us about the October SIGAR report about the security facilities and what you intend to do in a leadership capacity to address the issues that they have raised.

General DUNFORD. I will do that, Senator.

Senator MCCASKILL. Okay. Thank you for your service and I will look forward to visiting you in theater.

General DUNFORD. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator McCaskill.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you very much, General Dunford, for being here today and for taking on this assignment at what is a very challenging time both for the military and also as we look at the challenges still remaining before us in Afghanistan.

I want to just follow up a little bit on the issue that Senator McCaskill raised relative to CIGR. We had a brief conversation about this yesterday in my office. And I wonder if you could just, first of all, outline how you think the CIGR's work is going in Afghanistan and how you expect to continue to follow up as Commander working with the SIGAR in this capacity and then also commit, if you would, as you did yesterday to continuing to work closely to not only address the recommendations that are being made but to talk about how that work can go forward in a way that is cooperative.

General DUNFORD. Senator, thank you for that question.

Based on my discussions with General Allen and his staff, it is clear to me that they take the results of the SIGAR reports very seriously, and there is a continuous dialogue back and forth between the staff at ISAF and the special investigator for Afghanistan reconstruction.

As a result of some of the previous reports and as a result of some of the issues that have been raised with regard to corruption and with regard to contracts, they have changed the organizational construct at U.S. Central Command to provide oversight of these contracts. They have changed the organization within ISAF. General Allen has combined oversight of corruption with threat finance, with targeting, and so forth to bring together what were some cylinders of excellence into a holistic approach to deal with some of the issues highlighted in the SIGAR. And I also know, most importantly, that Ambassador Cunningham at our embassy in Kabul has taken this on and has an organization inside the embassy that provides oversight.

So I would see this as a very important role for me, if I am confirmed, as a leader to be decisively engaged in the results of the

SIGAR report, to take them seriously, and where necessary, to take remedial action.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much.

Major General Kenneth Dahl mentioned in an interview in the Wall Street Journal that the military has really learned a lot of lessons from the transition to a State Department- led mission in Iraq and that we are already working on preparing the change-over in Afghanistan.

As somebody who has spent significant time in Iraq, can you talk about what you think are the lessons that were learned from that experience and what we should be thinking about as we are moving forward with the transition in Afghanistan?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I can. And I think one of the most important lessons that General Dahl referred to is there is a number of functions that have been performed by the International Security Assistance Force and U.S. Forces, Afghanistan over the past few years. In fact, there is in excess of 400 tasks that have been performed by those two headquarters. And one thing we learned in Iraq was we did not start early enough to transition those tasks or identify tasks that may no longer need to be done. And so it is very important that we work with the State Department, that we work with the Afghan Government, that we work with our international partners, nongovernmental organizations, as the case may be, to migrate those tasks to an appropriate place so we can sustain them through the transition in 2014. I am quite sure that is what General Dahl was talking about. I was encouraged by the discussions in that regard during my recent visit.

And on the 29th of November this year here in

Washington, D.C., there will be a meeting between all the stakeholders specifically associated with that task migration to, again, identify where those tasks ought to be performed, what tasks may no longer be enduring. So having that construct in place well in advance of the transition in 2014 I think is quite important.

Senator SHAHEEN. When you say the "stakeholders," are you talking about—who is included in that group?

General DUNFORD. Senator, that will be Central Command, ISAF, USFOR-A. So all of our coalition partners will be represented, as well as representatives from NGOs and the State Department, USAID, and so forth. I imagine there will be some initial planning sessions to get it right, but I would expect a lot of energy and attention to be spent on this over the next 2 years.

Senator SHAHEEN. You raise an important point in talking about the various stakeholders because, obviously, this remains a coalition effort and making sure that we continue to keep our other partners, our European partners, engaged in this effort is very important. As somebody who chairs the European Affairs Subcommittee in Foreign Relations looking at NATO's role and the continued support of the European countries for our effort in Afghanistan has been very important.

Can you talk about the other kinds of work that you see as part of your portfolio, if you take over this job in Afghanistan, in terms of working with our NATO partners to ensure their continued support for this mission?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I can. And I would include in the important partners the most important partners, and those are our Afghan partners who will have the preponderance of responsibility for all this work that needs to be done over the next 2 years.

I think one of the first things that I need to do, if I am confirmed, is to go visit the capitals and listen to them and make sure I fully understand their plans both between now and 2014 and then what plans they may be willing to support post-2014. I think having good lines of communication back and forth between the capitals so they understand the progress that we are making in the campaign and that they are not surprised by decisions that may be made in the context of the campaign, that we engage their national leadership before those decisions are made because they are key stakeholders—obviously, they have young men and women in harm's way and they have a right to understand what decisions are being made that affect the folks that are there.

I think also as we conduct the campaign, which is first and foremost important, a piece of the campaign is obviously this transition plan. And so working very closely with our NATO partners and how they will retrograde and redeploy in the context of the campaign is important. How will they get their equipment, how will they get their people home, and how will we do that in a way that maintains continuity in the campaign, momentum in the campaign, at the same time meets our timeline. I think those are probably among the important aspects of the dialogue that needs to take place.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

Senator Blumenthal.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I want to join my colleagues in thanking you, General Dunford, and your family for your service to our Nation, your extraordinary service over many decades and the service that you will be performing. And I have every expectation that you will be confirmed. I guess that may be the bad news for you in some ways, but again your tremendous service to this country.

Many of the questions on my mind have been asked and answered, so I am not going to repeat them. But there is one area where I have been concerned—other members of the committee and I know that the Marine Corps and all of our Services—and that is the effort to counter the IEDs, explosive devices, that I think now are the predominant or at least a major cause of casualties to our men and women in uniform in that theater. And I wonder if you could suggest to the committee what additional steps, either in terms of equipment or efforts to work with Pakistan which is still the source of the ingredients that go into those IEDs can be taken and that you would contemplate taking in this new position.

General DUNFORD. Senator, thanks for that question, and the IED still remains the largest casualty producer in Afghanistan and an issue that clearly I need to be decisively engaged in, if I am confirmed in this position.

You alluded to Pakistan in your question and that absolutely is the number one area where we need to make some progress. The vast amount of materials for the IEDs do come from Pakistan.

I am encouraged by recent progress and development in our coordination at the border. I believe that, in part, that is a recognition of Pakistan that they also have a challenge due to the open borders and the threat moving back and forth from Afghanistan into Pakistan, as well as that has historically moved from Pakistan back to Afghanistan.

About 2 years ago, we established a tripartite framework to discuss border issues between Afghanistan, the coalition, and Pakistan. Within the next 2 weeks, we will sign the operating procedures associated with that tri-part agreement. But what I saw in my recent trip was that we have, in fact, at the three-star level had some successful discussions. There is a working group down at the one- and two-star level, but most importantly, down at the border coordination centers, we are now starting to see some development.

Pakistan has not built their border coordination centers that they are due to build as a result of that agreement that I referred to with the tri-part agreement, and so we look forward to doing that.

But I can assure you that if I am confirmed, a healthy dialogue, a consistent dialogue with Pakistan is going to be very important to address the border area. I think the border area is one of the key things we can do in addition to the other things that we have done as a result of the Congress' generosity to address the IED threat, but that border area with Pakistan and coming up with a mutual framework to ensure that we limit the amount of materials coming in to build IEDs is very important.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Are you satisfied that there is a commitment at your equivalent level in the Pakistani armed services to stopping the transfer of those bomb-making materials?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I cannot comment on the level of commitment from personal observation right now, so I will not do that. But I will tell you that I am not satisfied with the results, and that is really what is most important.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Well, I join you in that view, and I think other members of the committee and Congress would as well and hope that your persuasive efforts and your efforts to lead by example on this score are persuasive to the Pakistanis.

In terms of the drawdown of troops from Afghanistan, I hope that the remaining equipment that is necessary to detect and counter IEDs is kept in place as long as is necessary, in other words, that the equipment is not withdrawn. I assume that is part of the planning process.

General DUNFORD. Senator, it absolutely is.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. And the kinds of new equipment that may be necessary to protect our troops from roadside bombs and IEDs—is that being provided? And I am talking about new protective gear that can be worn. I understand that most of—probably all now have that kind of protective gear, but the new iterations, the new models of equipment, protective gear and other kinds of equipment still being provided.

General DUNFORD. Senator, as long as we have young men and women in harm's way, we need to stay in front of the threat and continue to adapt. And if I am confirmed, I can assure you that is exactly what we will do.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you.

I have one more area that I would like to cover and that is in terms of human trafficking. Senator Portman and I yesterday announced a caucus, the Senate Caucus to End Human Trafficking. There is an amendment that we have proposed to the national defense authorization bill that would provide new tools and penalties against use of trafficked labor by contractors who work for the Federal Government, in other words, use of taxpayer dollars on projects that involve slave labor. I think there is no other way to put it. And I wonder if you have any thoughts regarding the oversight and prevention of human trafficking among U.S. contractors that you would carry out if you are confirmed for this position.

General DUNFORD. Senator, I have seen some of the initial reports on human trafficking. Obviously, they are of great concern, and so I understand why you would be introducing legislation in that regard. If I am confirmed, I will certainly do what I can to help mitigate that threat working very closely, obviously, with Ambassador Cunningham at the embassy in Kabul.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. That concludes my questions.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator Blumenthal. And I commend you on your human trafficking initiative.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. General, you have described progress. You have given us some cautious optimism, indeed, some real optimism about the ability to achieve our mission in Afghanistan. I have seen progress with my own eyes. I happen to share your assessment of the progress which has been made and the reasons that you give—or the evidence that you give for your conclusion. I think that evidence is very much present. Obviously, the challenges that you have described are also there.

But I do not think that our media has given an accurate overview of the situation in Afghanistan because I think basically there has been appropriate focus on problems, on shortfalls. There has been appropriate reporting on failures where they have taken place, but there has been inadequate reporting in my opinion on the progress which has been made in Afghanistan. And so I think our people probably have a more negative view of prospects in Afghanistan than the people of Afghanistan have, according to the opinion polls that we have seen about Afghan public opinion. If that is true, it is the product of a free press, and I am not ever going to complain about a free press in the United States.

But I think it is important that if your own views continue after you get there that you find ways to present the positives so that it is not such a concentration in our media on the negatives that will continue because it is going to be a government which will continue to have corruption. It is going to be a military, an Afghan military, which is going to continue to have shortfalls, particularly in the enablers but also in terms of people who will turn on their own and turn on us. That is going to continue hopefully at a significantly reduced level, but there will be those examples.

So I hope that you would be aware of what is presented to our public. I do not want anything shaped. I do not want to try to—I am not suggesting, believe me, to anybody that you try to engage

in propaganda because that is not what we are looking for. We are looking for just a balanced presentation of the pluses and minuses that exist, and I just do not think it has been accurate from what I have seen with my own eyes in terms of a balanced media presentation of the situation in Afghanistan. It is just better I think than the average American thinks it is, and I think that is in large measure because it is better than the cross section of media presentation in this country. So I think you ought to just be aware of the importance that whatever the objective situation is in Afghanistan that it be fairly presented to our own people.

We very much appreciate your direct answers here today. We always appreciate the kind of testimony which you have given which is clear, which is direct. You have spoken some truth to power right here this morning, and frankly, that is always welcome and it better be welcome in a democratic government that we hear directly from people who testify in front of us, what their opinions are, and you have given us those this morning.

The objective now is to try to get your nomination, first of all, voted on by this committee, and I would hope that we could do that as soon as we have our—I believe that the situation on the floor is going to be that we will have votes the day that we come back from whatever the Thanksgiving break is. And I would hope that we could bring that up on that day and get this to the floor of the Senate so that we could have you in place, whatever the future might hold in terms of when the exact transition or the change of the Guard is. I think it is currently planned for late January or early February—is that correct—if you are confirmed, that you would take over from General Allen?

General DUNFORD. Senator, my understanding is early February.

Chairman LEVIN. Okay. That is the current plan.

And by the way, I share the positive comments about General Allen which have been made here this morning. There have been some statements made about his being a very, very terrific, fine soldier. I am hoping that he can stay in that position until the planned date for his departure. But I also have seen firsthand his extreme competence and capability, and I also have confidence in him similar to what has been expressed by colleagues here this morning.

But the world being what it is, we never know what tomorrow brings, what the fates have in store for us. But as far as your confirmation is concerned, I am very, very confident you will be promptly and overwhelmingly and hopefully unanimously confirmed. I see no reason that you would not be.

We give thanks to you and your wife, who is with you here this morning. We know how important families are. That has been expressed by, I think, all of us this morning, and we are sincere in that. And I think spouses are aware of our sincerity because we try to reflect that view in our bill, in our legislation about the importance of families in various ways, including the health care that is provided for families. We hope we always reflect our rhetoric in our legislation.

With that, again with our thanks to you and your family, we will stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:15 p.m., the committee adjourned.]