

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF  
GENERAL JOSEPH F. DUNFORD  
COMMANDER  
U.S. FORCES-AFGHANISTAN  
BEFORE THE  
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
ON  
THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN  
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## **Afghanistan: What We've Achieved**

### **I. Where We Are – State of the Campaign**

In the final year of the military campaign, U.S. Forces Afghanistan (USFOR-A) and our coalition partners have not forgotten the objective that brought us to Afghanistan more than 12 years ago: to prevent the country from once again becoming a safe haven for al Qaeda and international terrorism. Since 2001, our presence in Afghanistan and the extraordinary efforts of both conventional and special operations forces have prevented another 9/11. Today, USFOR-A forces continue to place constant pressure on terrorist networks. Concurrently, troops from the 49-nation International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) continue to develop credible and capable Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) – forces that can secure Afghanistan in the long term and prevent the re-emergence of safe havens from which al Qaeda can launch attacks against the U.S. and her allies.

Last June, coalition forces achieved a major milestone in the military campaign when the ANSF took the lead for security operations nationwide. Progress was further made when the ANSF emerged from the 2013 fighting season as a confident force capable of securing the Afghan people. With the ANSF in the lead, ISAF forces transitioned to a support role and began a train, advise, and assist mission initially focused on further maturing ANSF combat capability. Currently, ISAF advisors are re-orienting their focus away from developing combat skills to now developing the capabilities and institutions needed for the ANSF's long-term sustainability.

The nine remaining months of the ISAF campaign will have a decisive impact on Afghanistan's future. We will be focused on supporting the ANSF as they prepare for the fighting season, political transition, and security transition in December, when they will assume full responsibility for Afghanistan's security. ISAF will also continue to posture the force in preparation for NATO's post-2014 Resolute Support train, advise, and assist mission that will address gaps in capabilities that are necessary for the ANSF to become self-sustainable.

### **II. Where We Are – State of the ANSF**

Today, Afghanistan is being secured by a confident ANSF with limited coalition support. The only unilateral operations ISAF is conducting are for our own force protection, sustainment, and redeployment. As a result of the ANSF's new lead role and the coalition's new support role,

our Afghan partners are bearing the brunt of enemy attacks, although their cohesion remains strong. American and coalition casualties have significantly dropped, with casualties in 2013 being nearly a quarter of what they were in 2010.

The transition to Afghan forces leading security operations in the summer of 2013 was a marked change in the campaign, which had coalition forces leading combat operations for the previous 12 years. Despite ISAF's early recognition that Afghanistan's security would depend on indigenous forces and coalition efforts beginning in 2002 to build an Afghan security force, progress was slow. In 2009, enabled by the U.S. troops surge ordered by President Obama, the coalition made a conscious effort to first grow ANSF numbers (quantity) and get them into the fight. This was then followed by an effort – which continues today – to develop ANSF enablers and professionalize the ranks (quality). As a result of this plan, the ANSF have grown to a force of nearly 350,000 soldiers, airmen, and police today. These forces are augmented by an additional 26,000 local police forces.

In 2010, coalition and Afghan forces began conducting partnered operations, which developed combat capabilities and leadership skills from the tactical level on up. As a result of the ANSF's progress, President Obama and President Karzai agreed in January 2013 that Afghan forces would take the lead for security nationwide at the Milestone 2013 ceremony on June 18, 2013. As the Afghan forces stepped into the lead role for counterinsurgency operations, ISAF forces stepped back into a support role. This new role had coalition members serving as combat advisors to Afghan units to further develop tactical fighting skills and the integration of combined arms, such as artillery, mortars, and attack helicopters.

### 2013 Fighting Season

In their first fighting season in the lead, the ANSF proved capable of securing the Afghan people, fighting their own battles, and holding the gains achieved by ISAF over the last decade. Like the coalition forces who led operations the year prior, the ANSF successfully maintained control of all key terrain and populated areas. Today, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) remains in control of its 34 provincial capitals and all of its major cities. The majority of violence continues to take place away from populated areas, and polling shows the vast majority of Afghans hold a favorable view of their soldiers and police.

The ANSF consistently demonstrated tactical overmatch against the Taliban-led insurgency, and proved resilient in a tough fight. They independently planned, led and executed

combined-arms operations. They improved cooperation across the Ministry of Interior (police), the Ministry of Defense (army), and the National Directorate of Security (intelligence service). And they generated an impressive operational tempo as they secured the Afghan people.

The ANSF's improving capabilities were demonstrated in large and complex combat operations across the country. In July, the ANSF launched *Operation Semorgh* in eastern Afghanistan. It was the largest Afghan air assault in history, followed by a two-pronged attack into the Azrah Valley. The three-week operation – which involved the Afghan air force, the 201st and 203rd Army Corps, the 111th Capital Division, special operations, and police – began with Mi-35 attack helicopters escorting Mi-17s helicopters as they inserted 250 Afghan soldiers and 13,000 pounds of supplies. Afghan helicopters provided fire support and casualty evacuation while Afghan artillery and mortars provided surface fires in support of the ground force's movement through difficult, mountainous terrain. Despite insurgent attacks, bad weather, and the soldiers' fasting for Ramazan, the ANSF successfully cleared the valley of insurgents and secured the district center, facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid and voter registration materials. Once the operation was complete, Afghan police remained in the valley to provide for its long-term security. The ANSF independently planned, executed, and sustained the operation; ISAF only provided enabler support, such as close air support, casualty evacuation, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance.

Throughout the rest of the summer and winter, each of the six Afghan Army corps planned and executed multiple complex operations throughout the country with the support of the Afghan air force, special operations, and police. Highlights include the 205th Corps' *Operation Chamtoo* in southern Afghanistan, where they cleared almost three hundred villages in 14 days with minimal casualties; in the process, they discovered and confiscated 1.5 tons of homemade explosives and more than 1,000 IEDs and components. The 207th Corps's *Operation Abu Nasr Farahi* in western Afghanistan cleared insurgents along Highway 1, protecting the Afghan people and securing a vital road for commercial and military needs. The 209th Corps' *Operation Hindukush* in northern Afghanistan cleared insurgent safe havens in the Warduj Valley. And the 215th Corps' *Operation Oqab* in southwestern Afghanistan took the fight to insurgents in Sangin, demonstrating strong combined arms capabilities during clearing operations to deny insurgents safe haven.

The ANSF's growing capability was particularly evident during the Loya Jirga in November, when 3,000 Afghan leaders from around the country met in Kabul to discuss the U.S.-Afghanistan Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA). Despite concerted efforts from the Haqqani Network and other insurgents to disrupt the Loya Jirga, the ANSF successfully secured the event without incident. This accomplishment was the result of extensive planning and integrated operations in Kabul, other major urban centers, and the key routes connecting them by the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Defense, and the National Directorate of Security for weeks leading up to the event. This performance reflects a degree of coordination between the three different security pillars that simply didn't exist in early 2013.

Despite the ANSF's successes throughout the fighting season, they also faced several challenges. Due to existing capability gaps and shortfalls, the ANSF relied on ISAF for enabler support, particularly in the areas of close air support, casualty evacuation, logistics, counter-IED, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. The ANSF also suffered high casualties and instances of poor leadership, but impressively remained a cohesive and resilient fighting force.

On balance, after watching the ANSF respond to a variety of challenges over the past year, I do not believe the Taliban-led insurgency represents an existential threat to GIRoA or the ANSF. However, while the ANSF's performance shows they require less ISAF assistance in conducting security operations, they do need a great deal of help in developing the systems, the processes, and the institutions necessary to run a modern, professional army and police force.

#### *ANSF Capability Gaps*

ISAF forces are in the process of re-orienting from combat advising at the unit level to functionally-based advising at the Afghan security ministries, the six army corps, and the police zones. In this new role, advisors are focusing on tasks that will build the ANSF's long-term sustainability to make the progress that has been made to date enduring.

At the security ministries, advisors are focusing on building ministerial capacity in planning, programming, budgeting, and acquisition. Advisors are also working to improve integration between the different security pillars— army, police, and intelligence service – at all levels. In the fielded force, advisors will focus on capability gaps like the aviation, intelligence, and special operations. They will also focus on developmental shortfalls in areas like logistics, medical, and counter-IED. At all levels, our advisors will work to improve Afghan transparency

and accountability of donor resources, and reduce casualties and overall attrition. In total, our shift to functionally-based advising is putting the ANSF on a path to sustainment.

Despite our advisory efforts in 2014, four capability gaps will remain after the ISAF mission ends. I assess that without the Resolute Support mission, the progress made to date will not be sustainable. A limited number of advisors will be required in 2015 to continue the train, advise, and assist mission. These advisors will address gaps in 1) the aviation enterprise, 2) the intelligence enterprise, 3) special operations, and 4) the security ministries' capacity to conduct tasks such as planning, programming, budgeting, acquisition, and human resource management so they can provide tactical units the support they require to function. These advisors will put the Afghans on the path to sustainment that the Afghans can further develop after Resolute Support concludes.

In summary, although clear challenges exist along the security line of effort, I believe the physical capabilities and capacities of the ANSF will be sufficient to secure the election, to achieve transition in December, and – with a post-2014 advising mission – to provide for Afghanistan's long-term security. These collective efforts are hardening the Afghan state and giving it needed time to develop and mature. These efforts are also reducing the insurgency's operating space and incentivizing its participation in the peace process.

### **III. Where We Are – State of the Threat**

ISAF and Afghan forces remain focused on denying safe haven to al Qaeda and keeping pressure on the extremist network to limit the operational ability of al Qaeda, the Haqqani Network, and other transnational and foreign military groups inside Afghanistan.

Sustained counter-terrorism operations have prevented al Qaeda's use of the country as a platform for terrorism. Operations have restricted their permanent presence to isolated areas of northeastern Afghanistan and have resulted in only a seasonal presence in other parts of the country. These efforts have forced al Qaeda to focus on survival rather than on operations against the West. Counter-terrorism pressure placed on al Qaeda –as well as the elimination of fighters and facilitators – has prevented another attack on the homeland. Yet, continued operations are necessary to prevent al Qaeda from regenerating degraded capabilities.

Challenges remain despite this success, as the extremist network within Afghanistan has become more complex over the last decade. Where at one time al Qaeda could be isolated – as

we intended to do in 2001 – extremist networks have now expanded in the country. Increased cooperation and coordination can be seen between al Qaeda and other extremists like the Haqqani Network, Tahrik-e Taliban Pakistan, and Lashkar-e-Taiba.

The Haqqani Network remains the most virulent strain of the insurgency, the greatest risk to coalition forces, and a critical enabler of al Qaeda. The Haqqani Taliban also shares the Afghan Taliban's goals of expelling coalition forces, removing the Afghan government, and re-establishing an Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. They lead the insurgency in three eastern Afghan provinces (Paktika, Paktiya, Khost) and have demonstrated the capability and intent to launch and support high profile and complex attacks against the coalition across the country. In response to several dangerous threat streams against coalition and Afghan personnel, ANSF and U.S. special operations forces have expanded their security and counter-terrorism operations. These operations have successfully disrupted several dangerous threats streams that sought to inflict significant casualties on the force and break the coalition's will.

The Afghan Taliban also remain a potent and resilient threat. At the beginning of the 2013 fighting season, they outlined their operational objectives: seize and hold district centers, increase violence across the country, conduct insider and high profile attacks to garner media coverage, and crush the will of the ANSF in their first fighting season in the lead.

Despite their continued efforts, the Taliban made very limited progress in achieving these objectives and in exploiting ISAF's reduced troop presence to generate operational or strategic momentum. The Taliban were not able to hold terrain, crush the ANSF's spirit, or increase insider attacks and violence levels from 2012 when coalition forces led security operations. However, the Taliban were able to project violence into urban areas from rural safe havens, threaten freedom of movement along major highways, and contest government control in some areas. They were also able to conduct high profile attacks that negatively influenced Afghan and international community perceptions about security, and capitalize on the existing uncertainty surrounding the coalition's post-2014 mission. Despite these successes, recent polling data shows the Afghan population continues to widely reject the Taliban, challenging their ability to expand influence.

As we look to the remaining months of the ISAF campaign, we can expect the Taliban, the Haqqani Network, and other extremists to attempt a higher operational tempo than in previous years to disrupt the political process and prevent the signing of the BSA. They will

seek to increase propaganda, assassinations, and high profile attacks to create a perception of insecurity and weaken coalition cohesion. In response, ISAF will continue to support the ANSF as they continue a high rate of security operations to mitigate these threats.

While insurgent and terrorist threats have proved resilient, ISAF and ANSF operations have kept these groups at bay. Continued pressure will be required to prevent al Qaeda from regenerating degraded operations with the support of groups like the Haqqani Network. Continued pressure will also be required to address the broader extremist network in Afghanistan, which threatens the stability of the nation as well as the broader region. The long-term solution to this challenge remains a capable and sustainable security establishment and responsive institutions of civil governance that together can secure the nation and prevent the re-emergence of al Qaeda safe havens. Continued international support in both of these areas will be essential to GIRoA's long-term capacity to govern and serve as a security partner in the region.

#### **IV. Challenges and Opportunities**

##### **Strategic Partnership with GIRoA**

Despite political challenges, the fundamental partnership between ISAF and the ANSF remains strong. Coalition and Afghan leaders retain a positive day-to-day relationship and continue to work together in pursuit of shared strategic objectives. Afghan government, civil, and military leaders demonstrate a growing appreciation for the coalition's efforts; these leaders are genuine in their gratitude for our shared sacrifice over the last decade. I have also seen our Afghan partners develop a growing sense of ownership and pride in their army and police force. Over the last year, Afghans have begun to realize that they have credible security forces that can protect them. However, the Afghan people still desire continued and broader international support, as evidenced by the Loya Jirga's endorsement of the BSA and widespread popular sentiment among Afghans for a signed BSA.

##### **Narrative**

Uncertainty continues to exist throughout Afghan society and within the ANSF about the U.S.' and the international community's commitment to Afghanistan post-2014. Absent confidence and hope for a brighter future, many Afghans are planning for the worst. Numerous reports cite the depreciation of Afghan currency, plunging real estate prices, capital flight, and



young, well-educated Afghans trying to emigrate. This uncertainty, and a subsequent fear of abandonment, spurs hedging behavior by Afghan power brokers. Uncertainty also spurs hedging by regional actors. These behaviors have a corrosive effect on Afghan confidence and the broader campaign, and they distract attention from issues important to Afghanistan's future, such as good governance and economic development.

The Taliban continue to capitalize on these challenges and leverage the information environment to advance a narrative of coalition abandonment. In fact, the Taliban's failure to achieve their operational intent in 2013 was partially offset by their effectiveness in negatively influencing public perceptions about security and the future. In addition to undermining Afghan confidence and advancing a narrative that they are chasing coalition forces out of Afghanistan, the Taliban ranks continue to gain strength from their belief that all coalition forces will depart Afghanistan at the end of the year.

I believe a signed BSA and NATO Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) will address the Afghan people's concerns and damage the Taliban's confidence. These documents – combined with clarity on the post-2014 mission and associated financial commitments from the Chicago Summit and Tokyo Conference – will significantly enhance Afghan confidence and erode our enemy's will. While the information environment is a challenge today, I believe it can be turned around.

In the meantime, we are working to mitigate the risk that uncertainty poses to the relationship between the ANSF and the coalition. We are communicating our commitment through both actions and words, and are expressing our confidence in the ANSF's ability to secure the election and the Afghan people post-2014. We are also working to ensure they know how proud we are of our relationship – a relationship built on trust and a common vision for a stable, secure, and unified Afghanistan.

#### *Insider Threat*

Although insider attacks against ISAF forces in 2013 declined sharply from 2012, they remain a focus area for our force protection. Thus far, these attacks have not significantly affected the strong relationship between coalition and ANSF personnel, particularly in the field where they face a common enemy every day. ISAF is cautiously optimistic that the mitigation measures applied over the previous year are working. These measures have reduced, but not eliminated, the threat. We remain vigilant to prevent future insider attacks.

### Attrition

A high attrition rate, particularly in the Afghan National Army, continues to pose challenges to force development. The main causes of attrition are assessed as high operational tempo, sustained risk, soldier care/quality of life, and leave issues. Afghan casualties have also increased since the ANSF took the lead for security last June.

While combat losses comprise a relatively small percentage of ANSF attrition numbers, reducing ANSF casualties remains both a top moral and operational priority for ISAF and ANSF leaders. Several factors in addition to enemy action contributed to casualties in the 2013 fighting season, such as shortfalls in medical care and casualty evacuation. We are aggressively addressing these shortfalls in several ways: the introduction of combat lifesaver skills and medical kits so soldiers can give self aid and buddy aid at the point of injury, the use of Mi-17 helicopters for casualty evacuation, and improved Afghan medical capabilities and long-term care. Reducing casualties also depends on the ANSF's warfighting capability, which ranges from a commander's competency to a unit's ability to integrate combined arms. ANSF leaders are working hard to improve these areas.

Although the overall attrition rate is high, it has not impacted combat readiness, as the ANSF remains sustainable in numerical terms due to robust recruitment. However, if the current attrition rate persists, it could have an adverse effect on the long-term quality of the ANSF. Urgent action is therefore being taken to address the root causes of attrition beyond combat casualties, and to develop a culture of accountable leadership in the ANSF. In particular, ANSF senior leadership has established a Joint Attrition Working Group and an Absent Without Leave Prevention Committee to identify and mitigate its causes.

### Af-Pak Military to Military Relationship

Security within Afghanistan and Pakistan remains inter-dependent, and requires a cooperative effort between the two nations. Cooperation is necessary to address the common threat of extremism, mitigate the risk of violence on the Afghan-Pakistani border, and give Afghans and their neighbors confidence in the future. Another challenge involves enemy sanctuary in Pakistan, which is a major factor preventing ISAF's decisive defeat of the Afghan insurgency in the near term. To advance stability, ISAF continues to play a facilitator role in pursuit of a constructive and effective relationship between the Afghan and Pakistani militaries.

In the past year, positive political developments have provided space for the Afghanistan-Pakistan military relationship to grow. These developments include visits between President Karzai and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, their participation in tripartite meetings in London and Ankara, and Pakistan's support to an Afghan-led reconciliation process. As a result, ISAF was able to facilitate trilateral engagements at the senior military level that augmented a growing bilateral relationship at lower levels. However, progress remains fragile. Minor issues – as demonstrated by a border incident in December – can quickly stall gains in the bilateral relationship. However, the absence of publicity and unhelpful rhetoric during the December incident reflects a change to the status quo and signals the potential for continued progress.

### Stewardship of Resources

Stewardship of taxpayer dollars is a priority for USFOR-A, and is critical to keeping the trust and confidence of the American people. Yet, war is an inherently inefficient and challenging endeavor, and despite the dedicated efforts of many, cases exist over the years where American resources were not spent as efficiently as possible. USFOR-A takes seriously our obligation to protect taxpayer dollars, and is working hard to ensure both wise spending and the identification of areas for cost savings or avoidance.

In 2013, USFOR-A developed a five-step process to increase checks and balances and improve the planning, execution, and oversight of resources. This process mandates a continuous and rigorous review of all requirements (e.g., Afghan Security Force Funds, Military Construction, Afghanistan Infrastructure Fund, Commander's Emergency Response Program) based on changes in the mission and operating environment. Requirements are scrutinized and subsequently validated, de-obligated, or re-scoped based on input from relevant stakeholders. In fiscal years 2013 and 2014 (to date), these efforts have resulted in cost savings and avoidance of more than \$5 billion. USFOR-A has also welcomed and incorporated into our processes independent agencies' recommendations for improvement, which have proven most helpful when released in time to effect change.

USFOR-A will continue to scrutinize every dollar spent to ensure spending is necessary to mission success and results in the desired effect. This approach applies equally to post-2014 ANSF funding that was committed at the Chicago Summit.

## **V. Milestones and Major Events**

### **Presidential Election**

ISAF is decisively engaged in supporting the ANSF as they plan for the security of Afghanistan's presidential election on April 5th. The presidential election will serve as a defining moment in the campaign, as it will usher in the nation's first democratic and peaceful transfer of power. ISAF understands that an election process that is inclusive, transparent and credible will be critical to the long-term partnership between Afghanistan, the U.S., and the international community. Successful political transition will also be critical to meet a precondition for continued donor resources, as outlined in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework.

To ensure a secure environment that will both encourage and facilitate voter participation, ISAF is supporting the Ministry of Interior, which has lead responsibility for election security, and the Ministry of Defense and the National Directorate of Security, which are in support. ISAF assistance involves planning, logistical and operational support requested by, and in coordination with, GIRoA and the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). ISAF is also prepared to provide in extremis security support if needed. Throughout the election process, ISAF will remain a neutral player.

To reduce the risk of an election delay, ISAF is currently supporting the movement of election materials throughout the country. While the IEC and ANSF are transporting election materials to 98 percent of election locations (e.g., regional hubs, provincial centers, district centers, and polling centers), the Afghan government has requested limited assistance from ISAF due to security conditions, weather conditions, and the volume of election materials that need to be moved. ISAF assistance includes providing enablers – such as intelligence and air support – to the Afghan forces as they transport materials to 19 locations. ISAF is also directly moving materials to four regional distribution hubs, five provincial centers, and 17 districts. During air and ground movements by ANSF and ISAF forces, election materials have been and will remain under IEC control and custody.

My confidence in the ANSF's ability to secure the election is based on several factors. First, the ANSF have already facilitated a successful, nationwide voter registration process. Their performance during the fighting season and the Loya Jirga also serves as a positive indicator for the election. Second, there will be more forces providing security than during the

2009 election. Then, there were approximately 250,000 coalition and Afghan forces securing the election. In April, there will be approximately 425,000 troops, of which 375,000 will be Afghan. Third, ANSF planning efforts are well ahead of where they were in 2009 and include several rehearsal exercises to prepare for the historic event.

### *Posturing the Force*

As ISAF looks to December, two campaign imperatives guide our actions. First, we are taking steps to reduce risk and ensure a smooth transition to the Resolute Support mission. We are also focused on maintaining simultaneity in the campaign by building ANSF sustainability while providing support to the ANSF as they prepare for the election and the fighting season.

To focus our efforts, ISAF has divided 2014 into three phases with specific outcomes. On March 1st, we completed our first phase. This phase saw us continuing to transition from combat advising to functionally-based advising, and working with the ANSF to disrupt high profile threats. Concurrently, we executed 50 tasks to increase Afghan readiness, such as improving vehicle maintenance and stocking ammunition supplies. These tasks will help the ANSF operate throughout the election and fighting season without taking an operational pause or reaching a point where their operations are disrupted or halted due to lack of logistical support.

In the second phase of 2014, from now to July, we'll complete the transition to functionally-based advising. This will facilitate the arrival of ISAF's final troop rotation in July and will begin what we conceptually view as Phase 0 of Resolute Support. In the third and final phase, from August to December, we'll finish posturing the force to ensure a smooth transition to the post-2014 mission.

ISAF's retrograde and redeployment efforts remain on track or ahead of schedule. U.S. troops in theater number fewer than 34,000 – well below the 100,000 U.S. troops at the height of the surge. By December 31, U.S. forces will be at the post-2014 number decided by President Obama. As forces have redeployed, ISAF has closed, de-scoped, or transferred tactical infrastructure – ranging from large bases to small combat outposts – to the Afghans. Coalition bases and outposts now number less than 90, from a height of more than 850 in 2012. In December, we'll be at our Resolute Support number. In terms of materiel reduction, fewer than 10,000 U.S. vehicles not needed for the post-2014 mission will be returned to the military services. This is down from a high of more than 40,000 vehicles in June 2012. To provide

context, during the summer – and in the middle of the fighting season – we moved 6,000 vehicles.

### Post-2014 Mission

In anticipation of a signed BSA and NATO SOFA, ISAF continues to plan for the Resolute Support train, advise, assist mission. This mission will focus on the four capability gaps at the operational/institutional and strategic levels of the ANSF that will remain at the end of the ISAF mission: 1) Afghan security institution capacity, 2) the aviation enterprise, 3) the intelligence enterprise, and 4) special operations. In accordance with NATO guidance, ISAF is planning on a limited regional approach with 8,000 - 12,000 coalition personnel employed in Kabul and the four corners of Afghanistan. Advisors will address capability gaps at the Afghan security ministries, army corps, and police zones, before eventually transitioning to a Kabul-centric approach focused on the Afghan ministries and institutions. Due to delays in the completion of the BSA, and at the recent direction of NATO, we will begin planning for various contingencies in Afghanistan while still continuing to plan for Resolute Support.

## **VI. What Winning Looks Like**

Despite the remaining challenges in the campaign, we remain focused on winning in Afghanistan – as defined below. Its key components include:

- The transition of security responsibility to a confident, self-reliant and sustainable ANSF capable of protecting the population and securing a legitimate Afghan government
- An operationally ineffective al Qaeda deprived of safe haven from which to plan and conduct operations outside the area
- An acceptable political transition following an election viewed as inclusive, transparent, and credible by the Afghan people and the international community; and Afghan government adherence to the Mutual Accountability Framework
- A constructive Afghanistan-Pakistan military to military relationship

On December 31, we will reach the end of the ISAF combat mission. Until then, USFOR-A and ISAF will be focused on maximizing the time left to advance the campaign. While work remains after 2014 – such as building ANSF sustainability– the components of winning can largely be achieved by the end of the year. I am confident in our ability to effect full security transition in December. I am certain that counter-terrorism operations by American

and Afghan forces will continue to deprive al Qaeda of safe haven. I am optimistic that political transition will successfully take place. And I believe we are on track to develop a constructive military to military relationship between the Afghanistan and Pakistan militaries that can be a foundational element in a broader partnership between the two countries. In the remaining months of the campaign, American and coalition personnel will work to achieve these goals.

When the men and women of USFOR-A and ISAF depart Afghanistan this December, they will depart knowing their hard work and sacrifice – and that of those who came before them – have not only built a capable Afghan security force, have not only given the Afghan people the opportunity to determine a future of their own, but have also enhanced our collective security and kept the American people safe. That is what winning will look like.