

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

WRITTEN POSTURE STATEMENT

STATEMENT OF GENERAL

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Afghanistan: Progress, Opportunities, and Commitment

Where We Are – State of the Environment

The conflict in Afghanistan has now shifted into a fundamentally new phase. For the past 11 years, the United States and our Coalition allies have been leading combat operations. Now the Afghans are taking over, and ISAF is stepping back into a supporting role. The progress made by the ISAF-led surge over the past three years has put the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) in control of all Afghanistan's major cities and 34 provincial capitals, and driven the insurgency away from the population. ISAF's primary focus is now shifting from directly fighting the insurgency to supporting the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) in their efforts to hold and expand these gains.

The progress made by the ANSF enabled President Obama and President Karzai to agree at the January Summit that Milestone 2013 -- Afghan security lead throughout the country -- will be announced later this spring. This announcement will mark ISAF's official transition to its supporting role: fully focused on training, advising, and assisting the ANSF. In fact, this transition has largely taken place. The ANSF are now leading the vast majority of operations countrywide. ISAF casualties are lower than they have been since 2008. The majority of ISAF bases have been transferred to the ANSF or closed, and construction is complete on the majority of ANSF bases. The U.S. will redeploy 34,000 troops by February 2014, and the ANSF have grown to nearly 352,000 personnel. Afghanistan's populated areas are increasingly secure, and the ANSF have successfully maintained security gains in areas that have already been transitioned. Still, the ANSF will continue to need training, advising, and key combat support from ISAF, including close air support, logistics, and intelligence, through the end of the ISAF combat mission in December 2014.

However, security challenges remain. The insurgency's sanctuaries in Pakistan, limited GIROA institutional capacity, and endemic corruption remain the greatest impediments to long-term stability and sustainable security in Afghanistan. ISAF will continue to work with GIROA to address its challenges in order to deliver effective governance to the Afghan people.

Where We Are – State of the ANSF

The ANSF are at the forefront of the fight and are now responsible for maintaining and expanding security in the face of the insurgency. Despite the early recognition that Afghan security would depend on indigenous security forces, building the ANSF lagged in the initial years after we forced the Taliban government from power. In late 2009, a concerted effort to grow the ANSF was initiated with the goal of generating and fielding trained and equipped Afghan combat elements and getting them into the fight. Unit partnering between Afghan and ISAF forces – enabled by the U.S. troop surge ordered by President Obama – provided the ANSF the space to develop combat capabilities and leadership skills from the tactical level on up. GIRoA and ISAF deliberately focused first on ANSF growth (force size), followed by the development of enablers and the professionalization of the ranks. This decision was made with a full understanding that the ANSF, once built to size by 2012, would experience some initial shortfalls in equipment, logistics, personnel, and leadership – foreseeable challenges that would be overcome in the 2012-2014 period as Afghan knowledge, capacity, and experience increased.

Moving into the 2013 fighting season, the insurgency now confronts a combined ANSF and Afghanistan Local Police (ALP) force of over 350,000 personnel who have secured over 87 percent of Afghanistan's population, and are leading 80 percent of all conventional operations. These forces are operating with growing confidence, improved leadership, warfighting capability, and a vision for the future. They are a source of security, confidence, and pride for the Afghan people – factors the insurgents must consider as their influence and effectiveness in Afghanistan wanes.

As of early 2013, most of our Coalition partnerships with the ANSF have evolved into advise and assist relationships; these relationships are designed to provide tailored support and to continue increasing ANSF confidence and capabilities. Those advisory roles are designed to evolve and reduce over time until ANSF units can fully stand on their own in a sustainable manner.

The ANSF continue to improve at a steady pace with marked quality increases seen in units capable of conducting independent operations. Over the last year, only one of the 23 Afghan National Army (ANA) brigade headquarters was conducting independent operations. Today the

ANA has one corps/division headquarters, five brigade headquarters, and 27 battalions (4 of the 27 are garrison support units) capable of operating independently. The growing ANA Special Operations Command (ANASOC) has also made strides towards becoming an independent and effective force – with the vast majority of ANA special operations forces (SOF) missions, to include night operations, being Afghan-led.

Evidence of the ANSF's growing capacity to conduct their own increasingly sophisticated operations can be seen in Laghman, Kabul, and Paktika provinces. Here, the ANSF have implemented the layered security concept that decreases vulnerabilities in any single arm of the force by leveraging the capabilities of the entire ANSF (e.g. ALP, ANASOF, ANA, Afghan National Police (ANP), Afghan Border Police (ABP), National Directorate of Security (NDS), etc.), providing security to the Afghan people with minimal assistance from the Coalition. This “web” of enduring security starts locally, then spreads from the bottom up to the population centers, through the rural areas, and out to the borders.

Layered security consists of all ANSF elements having a defined role within an established network, each one responsible for a specific security operation's focus defined geographically (Border, Village, District, Province), or by other objectives outlined in a security strategy. For example, a layered security operation might consist of the Afghan Uniformed Police (AUP) patrolling a population center and its highways, while the ABP provides an outer security layer by controlling border crossings. Simultaneously, the ANA conduct combat patrols and operations based on NDS intelligence providing a security layer in between the border and population center. Command, control, coordination and intelligence for the entire layered security operation is conducted at the Operational Coordination Center (OCC). The OCCs are designed to manage and disseminate information and intelligence proactively or in response to an incident, and laterally share information that enables rapid joint action at the provincial level and below. This integrated combination of information sharing, decision support, and the ability to direct operations makes it more difficult for criminals or insurgents to succeed. The Afghan ability to implement this layered security environment will increase once the Afghan Air Force (AAF) becomes fully capable. This ANSF collective effort is an example of how Afghans have taken responsibility for their own security and are making marked and sustainable progress on the ground.

In the last year, the Coalition has begun transitioning districts and provinces in the east and south. There have been setbacks during these operations, as we expected in any transition as dramatic as the ones described above. But, the Afghans are learning from their mistakes and are pressing on to become increasingly independent and effective. This is a part of a larger story of resilience and resolution. Throughout last summer and fall, the ANSF fought increasingly on their own, with decreasing enabling support from U.S. and Coalition forces. In Kandahar's Zharey District, for example, we reduced U.S. troops from 3,500 to 300 last October. Afghan soldiers are now patrolling independently and attacks have not increased. We estimate that the number of Taliban fighters have fallen from 900 to 100. In neighboring Panjwai District, local villages have risen up against the Taliban and their harsh tactics. When they did, Afghan police quickly reinforced the villagers, enabling them to survive a Taliban counterattack.

In another branch of the ANSF, the Afghan Air Force's (AAF) emerging capability was recently demonstrated in Regional Command (RC)-East, where winter flight missions were successfully conducted to resupply the ANSF at forward operating bases in Nuristan Province. In another example, the AAF provided direct support to the ABP mission to supply local villages and secure contested territory in RC-South. While many challenges remain, the progress across the ANSF has been genuine and is already creating a significant impact on both the physical and psychological aspects of the fight.

ANSF Challenges and Gaps in 2013

Having realized the initial goal of growing and equipping the ANSF into an organization that will be capable of assuming the lead security role, we have shifted emphasis to building capacity and fielding more complex and technologically advanced capabilities. ANSF progress towards advanced capabilities has been measured. Significant gaps in some ANSF capabilities persist. The ANSF will continue to require ISAF support in areas including battle command, intelligence fusion, logistics, casualty evacuation (CASEVAC), Counter-Improvised Explosive Device (C-IED), surface fires, engineer and explosive ordnance, and aviation. Current ISAF support and the subsequent RESOLUTE SUPPORT mission (the NATO post-2014 mission) force must take a tailored approach to provide train, advise, and assist support focused on very specific capabilities to maintain the current ANSF development trajectory.

The ANSF have made some progress in enablers such as logistics and they are increasingly taking responsibility for distribution, maintenance, ammunition management, fuel, and other classes of supply at the national and regional logistics nodes and institutions. ANSF intelligence capability has seen improvements. ANA Military Intelligence Companies with human intelligence (HUMINT), signals intelligence (SIGINT), and counter-intelligence sections are currently integrated at the Corps level to support several ANSF mission sets. The Afghan Air Force is improving its ability to provide air support to the ANSF. These and other capabilities that need further development have been identified for inclusion in the current ISAF and subsequent RESOLUTE SUPPORT train, advise, and assist effort. Capabilities that will require continued development after 2014 include aviation, explosive ordnance disposal, engineer, and personnel management. While not exhaustive, current capability gaps include:

- The need for continued assistance with planning, coordination, fire support integration, control of CAS, intelligence, medical evacuation, and command and control, as highlighted by the recent 209th Corps Operations in Badakhshan .
- Intelligence sharing exists, but is not a capability that has been cultivated and standardized across the ANSF. Information sharing between the NDS and ANA remains uneven. In an effort to cultivate intelligence sharing, the ANSF Operational Coordination Centers are increasingly focused on facilitating intelligence sharing at the regional and provincial levels, where we see some success. However, despite the progress, ANSF commanders tend to rely on what they are most familiar with, such as tactical-level source operations and intelligence sharing based on personal relationships.
- The AAF will require increased capability and capacity going into 2015 due to late equipment fielding, contracting problems, and personnel shortfalls. ISAF currently predicts that this gap will exist through 2016. Coalition advisors will continue working to build sufficient fixed-wing, rotary-wing, close-combat attack, and intelligence air platform capabilities.
- While route clearance and explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) capabilities continue to improve throughout the ANA, significant challenges exist for generating fully manned, trained, and equipped EOD teams. The majority of ANSF casualties come from IEDs. As of

February 2013, the ANA has only 59 validated EOD teams out of an authorized 230, and the ANP has 14 validated teams out of an authorized 88. This gap will likely endure through 2015 and beyond.

- ANSF personnel issues, like that of many militaries, are varied and range from shortages, literacy, retention, attrition, and desertion. The ANSF continue to suffer from non-commissioned officer (NCO) shortages. The ANA requires over 10,000 NCOs, while the ANP requires over 5,000. In the ANA, the core limitations in NCO generation remain the limited number of functionally literate applicants. Just as in many regional armies, the professionalization of the ANSF NCO corps has not yet occurred, with NCOs being underrepresented across the forces and lacking authorities required to effectively lead troops.
- Attrition within the ANA also continues to be a significant challenge, creating a burden on recruiting and training structures. The ANA's sustained high attrition rates remain a significant concern and threaten the growth and development of a professional, competent, and capable force. Vacancies are not always filled quickly or with properly trained personnel, presenting challenges for units at the operational level. Furthermore, attrition creates a burden on recruiting and training assets, increasing the overall cost of the force. The ANA attrition rate continues to exceed the monthly target rate of 1.4 percent; for the last year the monthly average was 2.7 percent per month. This attrition rate equates to the loss of around 5,000 personnel per month or 60,000 per annum. The ANA leadership tracks attrition data and the reasons most often cited for leaving the army are issues of leadership, family separation, leave, and operational tempo. Since many of the underlying issues with attrition pertain to leadership, Minister of Defense Mohammadi formed an Evaluation Commission to assess his commanders, and if need be, replace unsatisfactory leaders from battalion through corps levels.

Mitigation Efforts into 2014

In most battlefield enabler and functional areas, ANSF capabilities will never equal those of the Coalition. But parity between Coalition and Afghan forces is not necessary for the requirements of Afghan security, and is therefore not the right measure of Afghan capabilities. In most areas, the ANSF will do things differently than the Coalition has done them. They will utilize different

tools and techniques to achieve the same net effect. Indirect fires, for example, can be provided by mortars rather than close air support; casualty evacuation can be accomplished by ground rather than air; and planning will be accomplished in an Afghan way. In some cases, too, the ANSF may simply choose not to do some things that they would have undertaken while partnered with us. But it is a mistake to discount organic Afghan capabilities and techniques because they do not meet Western standards – the ANSF have other advantages (local familiarity with the culture and terrain, in-depth understanding of their enemies tactics and techniques, ingenuity, etc.) that they can leverage to defeat the security challenges they face. These organic capabilities and methods will most often be sufficient to preserve their own confidence and that of the Afghan people. Where the ANSF lack sufficient independent capability, we will continue to provide security force assistance to close the gaps until such time as the Afghans are able to provide their own capacity and capabilities for themselves.

Although the ANSF are developing solutions to provide needed enabler capabilities, continued support will be required for the foreseeable future. We have developed a tailored plan to accelerate key enablers as a part of transition to help improve the future self-sufficiency of the ANSF to protect the Afghan population, manage violence, and contain the insurgency through sustained layered security operations. We anticipate most of these enablers to be fielded by the end of 2014 with capability development continuing through the RESOLUTE SUPPORT mission.

Where We Are – State of the Insurgency

U.S. and Coalition forces, working side by side with our Afghan partners, have reversed the insurgency's momentum and pushed insurgents out of population centers. By the end of last year's fighting season, the ANSF and ISAF had deprived the insurgents of key safe havens, command and control nodes, and support zones. They are now less capable, less popular, and less of a threat to the Afghan government than a year ago.

Despite this degradation, safe havens in Afghanistan and sanctuaries in Pakistan continue to provide Taliban senior leadership some freedom of movement and freedom of action, facilitating the training of fighters, and the planning of operations. The Afghan Taliban and all its sub-

groups, including the Haqqani Network, remain capable of conducting high profile attacks, though counterterrorism pressure has degraded this ability. However, the Taliban remain firm in their conviction that ISAF's drawdown and perceived ANSF weakness, especially when supplemented with continued external support and with sanctuary in Pakistan that the Taliban exploit, will translate into a restoration of their pre-surge military capabilities and influence.

Sustained counter-terrorism operations have also eliminated dozens of al Qaeda enablers and exerted pressure on al Qaeda personnel, restricting their movement to isolated areas of northeastern Afghanistan. Despite effective counter-terrorism pressure on al Qaeda and its Taliban enablers, and on the small number of al Qaeda fighters in Afghanistan, al Qaeda's relationship with local Afghan Taliban remains intact.

Challenges

Establishing a Constructive ANSF-Pakistan Military Relationship

The security, especially along the border, of Afghanistan and Pakistan is an interdependent issue that requires a cooperative effort between the two countries.

The Afghanistan-Pakistan relationship has ebbed and flowed over time, but both nations acknowledge that stability in Afghanistan impacts Pakistan and vice versa. The unresolved border issues between Afghanistan and Pakistan are a historical source of friction between the two countries. Actions by both sides exacerbated this friction and contributed significantly to the loss of trust necessary for a meaningful relationship between each country's military forces. Last fall, as a step toward improving this relationship, ISAF led the development of a Tripartite Border Standard Operating Procedure. This document is designed to improve cross border coordination between ISAF, the ANSF, and the Pakistan military. ISAF continues to work to improve the cooperation, participation and commitment of the Afghans and Pakistanis.

Recently the ANSF established a more robust Tripartite Joint Operations Center in Kabul, providing general officers on both sides with direct access to their respective Ministries. On-going Border Flag Meetings continue to address border issues and are key to develop and

improve cross-border relations. While we see some initial progress, serious challenges remain. Our goal remains to develop the trust necessary between the two countries so that they will eventually be able to maintain a constructive bilateral military-to-military relationship.

Insider Threat

One tactic the insurgents use to sow distrust and attack our resolve is infiltration in friendly forces for the purposes of attacking from the inside, sometimes described as “Green on Blue” or “Green on Green” attacks. We recognize the insider attacks are a threat to Afghan and Coalition forces and take this issue very seriously. ISAF is a learning, adaptive organization, and we have devoted a tremendous amount of time and energy to better understand this threat. Together, ISAF and the Afghan government have undertaken numerous measures to reduce the risk of insider attacks, including improved vetting and screening, counter-intelligence, and cultural awareness. We are constantly refining our approach.

Our actions are based upon the three pillars: Force Protection, Situational Awareness, and Counter-Intelligence (CI). Our Force Protection (FP) efforts include the assignment of a dedicated FP Officer to provide a daily risk assessment and adjust FPO measures as appropriate. We have also instituted guidance to employ Guardian Angels to prevent insider attacks or reduce the effects of these attacks. We have brought in outside support to provide Insider Threat Situational Awareness Training with mobile training teams. These teams provide a sophisticated understanding of Human Behavior Pattern Recognition Analysis, helping to identify predictive indicators of potential insider attacks. Our final pillar encompasses the expansion of our CI teams for both the Coalition and Afghan National Army; we have accomplished this by employing additional resources from Allied Command Counter-Intelligence, while the Afghans have transferred CI personnel from the Ministry of Interior and National Directorate of Security over to the Afghan National Army.

Civilian Casualties

The protection of the Afghan population remains a top ISAF priority, and avoidance of civilian casualties is one of ISAF’s highest priorities. We have taken significant actions over the past year to minimize these tragic events. As a result, ISAF-caused civilian casualties have been reduced by almost half in comparing 2011 to 2012. These casualties are, rightly, a concern to the

people and the President of Afghanistan. We are working with the GIRoA to further reduce ISAF-caused civilian casualties and maintain the trust and support of the Afghan government and the Afghan people.

ISAF continues to work closely with its Afghan counterparts to ensure accurate and timely reporting of civilian casualties. Supporting security transition is the transfer of responsibility for civilian casualties avoidance and mitigation measures, procedures, and capabilities to the ANSF. In order to support effective protection of the Afghan population, in December the Ministry of Defense hosted its first Population Protection Conference to discuss and address these issues.

Lessons Learned

Detention Facility in Parwan. The transfer of the Detention Facility in Parwan to the Afghan government reaffirmed Afghan sovereignty, while preserving our force protection requirements. Now known as the Afghan National Detention Facility – Parwan (ANDF-P), the facility represents an emerging sense of sovereignty for the Afghan people, allowing them to assume responsibility for the detention and prosecution of detainees under the authority of the Afghan constitution. During the transfer ceremony, GIRoA officials highlighted their responsibilities for detention operations in accordance with the Afghan rule of law, due process, and international standards for the humane treatment of detainees. While the day represented a transfer of authority, there is still work in progress to transition the management functions of the facility. We still have an appropriate presence at the facility in support of Afghan forces. We will continue to train, advise, and assist the Detentions Operations Command, the Afghan Review Board process, and the Justice Center at Parwan as Afghanistan’s capability to operate independently fully develops.

We did not arrive at this juncture overnight; the original Memorandum of Understanding was signed on March 9th, 2012, and it took a year of continued work at the facility to build sufficient Afghan capacity and capabilities to finalize the transfer of authority – that work continues as we mark another milestone in the transition of this mission. The Agreement that determined the final requirements for the transfer reaffirms our mutual commitment to the lawful and humane treatment of detainees, while ensuring proper protection of Afghan, U.S., and Coalition Forces. This transfer improved our strategic partnership with Afghanistan, sets the stage for increased

cooperation in the broader transition framework, and fulfilled the pledges made by President Obama and President Karzai during their Joint Statement in January.

ISSUES

Elections in 2014

A peaceful and successful transition of the Afghan Presidency in 2014 will be a crucial step toward a confident, secure, and stable way ahead in Afghanistan. Elections must be seen to be inclusive, free, and fair to the Afghan people. A successful political transition is also a precondition for the continued flow of resources as described in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework. Donor confidence and sustained flow of pledged funding are critical for continued progress in a stable Afghanistan. ISAF will support the ANSF as they provide security for the elections process.

Force Posture

As the Campaign transitions in the coming 20 months to the RESOLUTE SUPPORT train, advise, and assist mission in support of the ANSF, we will also be redeploying U.S. forces to reach our 34K force structure by February 2014 and retrograde equipment. Following that, we will further redeploy forces to a level yet to be determined by the end of 2014. Although challenged by geography, weather, and occasional disruptions in the land routes, we can complete retrograde and redeployment of U.S. Forces from Afghanistan. We have sufficient transportation capacity to meet redeployment and retrograde requirements. The combined capabilities of the Multi-Modal (M/M) network, the Northern Distribution Network (NDN), and the Pakistan Ground Lines of Communication (PAK GLOCs) provide redundant capabilities to meet our requirements.

U.S. Forces – Afghanistan (USFOR-A) redeployment and retrograde operations began in 2012 with the recovery of surge forces. From January 2012 through March 2013, USFOR-A reduced force levels by 28 percent, reduced U.S. bases by 70 percent, reduced rolling stock equipment by 45 percent, and reduced non-rolling stock equipment and supplies by 26 percent. We are

confident in our ability to successfully continue redeployment and retrograde operations through 2014 as we transition to the post-2014 mission.

Contractor Drawdown. In concert with our mission requirements and overall retrograde and base closure/transfer, we are responsibly drawing down the contractor footprint, both in terms of personnel and equipment. In August 2012, we stood up the Operational Contract Support Drawdown Cell, and tasked them with this specific mission, giving particular emphasis to applying lessons learned from Iraq. With this cell in place, we put our primary focus on the largest contracts in theater and are currently executing a plan that will yield a reduction in contractor personnel by approximately 25,000 (~25 percent) by the end of calendar year 2013. A combination of base closure and a further de-scoping of contract requirements will allow us to continue to reduce contractor footprint through calendar year 2014. We are also putting great emphasis on responsible disposition of contractor-managed government-owned equipment in theater. To make this happen, we are collaborating closely with Defense Logistics Agency, Defense Contract Management Agency, and other key stakeholders to ensure we have a fiscally responsible and logistically feasible plan for materiel reduction of this equipment. Over the next 21 months, this approach will result in a responsible contractor reduction that appropriately balances mission risk with our need for retrograde, base closure/transfer, and materiel reduction.

During this transition, commanders will move to more expeditionary standards and balance quality of life, safety, fiscal stewardship, and mission. For example, we will reduce our in-theater food stock by changing the meal cycle to two Meals-Ready-to-Eat and two hot meals, we will reduce the use of non-tactical vehicles on our bases, and we will begin to descope the services provided to our soldiers and civilians such as contract laundry. We will continue to provide wireless internet services as long as possible which is important to the morale of our force and provides a vital link to their families.

Stewardship of Resources Remains a Key Task

Afghan Security Force Funds (ASFF)

A critical tool in our efforts to support the development of the ANSF has been the use of the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund (ASFF) which provides the resources required to train,

sustain, and equip a force of 352,000 Afghan soldiers and police as well as 30,000 Afghan local police. A combination of ongoing Department of Defense reviews, Department of Defense reprogramming, and Congressional reallocation reduced the original FY 2012 request from \$12.8 billion to \$9.2 billion. ASFF received \$5.1 billion in FY 2013 against a request of \$5.7 billion. This reduction will result in the delay in deploying some needed enabling capabilities. The FY 2013 budget shifted emphasis from building, equipping, and training to professionalizing and sustaining the force. It will include some key enabler builds as well as equipping and infrastructure requirements for the Afghan Air Forces and Special Operations Forces as they continue to build their capabilities.

Commander's Emergency Response Program

The Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) remains important; although it will reduce as our forces reduce. Working collaboratively with the Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction and the Army Audit Agency, we have made significant improvements in policy and execution that provided significant return on investment. In FY12, ISAF was able to reduce CERP projects in both number and scale due to improving security conditions and a decreasing requirement for humanitarian relief and reconstruction. Even so, the right-sizing of this critical enabling program continued to emphasize small-scale, high-impact projects that delivered immediate assistance to the local population with 96 percent of the projects executed in FY12 valued at less than \$100K each and 90 percent under \$10K each. CERP remains a critical tool for our Commanders on the ground.

Military Construction

Despite a dynamic and evolving operational environment, ISAF and USFOR-A remain firmly committed to efficiently managing congressionally appropriated Military Construction (MILCON) funds to support our warfighters. By establishing a deliberate process to review, validate, and adapt this multi-billion dollar investment, the command ensured effective resource stewardship while providing the quality facilities needed by our troops. As a result, since 2011, we have recommended and received approval for the cancellation/de-scope of over 100 MILCON projects with an estimated cost avoidance/savings of nearly \$1.3 billion.

Afghanistan Infrastructure Fund

Afghanistan Infrastructure Fund (AIF) is a Department of Defense funding source that uses two-year funds for the execution of critical infrastructure projects in the power, water, transportation, and rule-of-law sectors. The projects are carefully selected, assessed, and coordinated with GIRoA, the U.S. Department of State, and the U.S. Agency for International Development to ensure that they are both sustainable and congruent with Afghanistan's future infrastructure priorities. AIF projects are critical to locking in stability gains and providing a foundation for internal economic growth that is less reliant on external aid. Nearly all AIF funds (99 percent) are spent in the East, South, and Southwest areas of Afghanistan where they provide positive counter-insurgency effects in support of the ANSF and encourage long-term security and stability. In addition, two-year funds enable USFOR-A to execute large, complex projects that were not possible with CERP. Most importantly, the AIF program serves as an effective counter to the insurgent narrative of abandonment.

What Winning Looks Like

Despite the remaining challenges, we can win in Afghanistan. The key elements of our success 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 a safe haven from which to plan and conduct operations outside the area
- An acceptable political transition, defined by inclusive, free, fair elections and Afghan government adherence to the Mutual Accountability Framework
- A constructive ANSF-Pakistan military relationship

We will have reached the end state of our combat operations when security conditions are set for the Afghan people to exploit a Decade of Opportunity. All of this is achievable -- but it is not inevitable. Winning in Afghanistan will require us to remain focused on why we are there and firmly committed to achieving our objectives.