

NOMINATION OF GENERAL DAVID H. PETRAEUS, USA, FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF GENERAL, AND TO BE COMMANDER, INTERNATIONAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE FORCE, AND COMMANDER, UNITED STATES FORCES AFGHANISTAN

TUESDAY, JUNE 29, 2010

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:36 a.m. in room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator Carl Levin (chairman) presiding.

Committee members present: Senators Levin, Lieberman, Reed, Akaka, Ben Nelson, Bayh, Webb, McCaskill, Udall, Hagan, Begich, Burris, Kaufman, McCain, Inhofe, Chambliss, Graham, Thune, Wicker, LeMieux, Brown, Burr, Vitter, and Collins.

Committee staff members present: Richard D. DeBobes, staff director; and Leah C. Brewer, nominations and hearings clerk.

Majority staff members present: Ilona R. Cohen, counsel; Jessica L. Kingston, research assistant; Michael J. Kuiken, professional staff member; Gerald J. Leeling, counsel; Peter K. Levine, general counsel; William G.P. Monahan, counsel; Michael J. Noblet, professional staff member; Russell L. Shaffer, counsel; and William K. Sutey, professional staff member.

Minority staff members present: Joseph W. Bowab, Republican staff director; Adam J. Barker, professional staff member; John W. Heath, Jr., minority investigative counsel; Michael V. Kostiw, professional staff member; David M. Morriss, minority counsel; Diana G. Tabler, professional staff member; and Dana W. White, professional staff member.

Staff assistants present: Brian F. Sebold, and Breon N. Wells.

Committee members' assistants present: Vance Serchuk, assistant to Senator Lieberman; Carolyn A. Chuhta, assistant to Senator Reed; Nick Ikeda, assistant to Senator Akaka; Greta Lundeborg, assistant to Senator Bill Nelson; Ann Premer, assistant to Senator Ben Nelson; Patrick Hayes, assistant to Senator Bayh; Gordon I. Peterson, assistant to Senator Webb; Tressa Steffen Guenov, assistant to Senator McCaskill; Jennifer Barrett, assistant to Senator Udall; Roger Pena, assistant to Senator Hagan; Lindsay Kavanaugh, assistant to Senator Begich; Roosevelt Barfield, assistant to Senator Burris; Halie Soifer, assistant to Senator Kaufman.;

Anthony J. Lazarski, assistant to Senator Inhofe; Lenwood Landrum and Sandra Luff, assistants to Senator Sessions; Clyde A. Taylor IV, assistant to Senator Chambliss; Andy Olson, assistant to Senator Graham; Jason Van Beek, assistant to Senator Thune; Erskine W. Wells III, assistant to Senator Wicker; Brian Walsh, assistant to Senator LeMieux; Scott Clendaniel, assistant to Senator Brown; Brooks Tucker, assistant to Senator Burr; and Ryan Kaldahl, assistant to Senator Collins.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CARL LEVIN, CHAIRMAN

Chairman LEVIN. Good morning, everybody.

Before we begin today's hearing, I want to comment on the loss that our committee, the Senate, and the Nation suffered yesterday morning. Robert C. Byrd was a member of this committee for nearly three decades. And just as he did in all of his Senate work, he was a relentless advocate for the enduring traditions of the Senate, including our respect for the legislative authority that the Constitution places in our hands to exercise and to defend. He was an eloquent spokesman for the vital role that Congress plays in national security and foreign affairs in our constitutional system. He was a treasured colleague and a friend to the members of the Armed Services Committee, to the entire Senate, and to the people of this Nation. His life's work and his legacy will help guide us, and will guide future Senates.

This morning, the committee considers the nomination of General David H. Petraeus to be Commander of the NATO International Security Assistance Force, ISAF, and Commander, U.S. Forces Afghanistan.

General, you testified before this committee on Afghanistan just 2 weeks ago, and certainly no one foresaw the events that bring you to testify here again today. When confirmed, you will bring highly experienced leadership and a profound understanding of the President's strategy in Afghanistan, which you helped shape as commander U.S. Central Command.

I want to thank you for your willingness, at the President's request, to leave that position to take charge of the campaign in Afghanistan. We appreciate your sacrifice and that of your family. Your wife, Holly, is with you this morning. And so, we all want to thank her personally for her commitment and her sacrifices along the way.

I must tell you, General, that her understanding of your doing your patriotic duty, as you are now doing again, taking over the command in Afghanistan, her understanding and support of that is truly inspiring. We thank her.

We profoundly thank you, Mrs. Petraeus.

I also want to express my gratitude to General McChrystal for his great service to our Nation over three decades. Fate takes strange bounces at times, and working through them with dignity and honor, as has General McChrystal, is a hallmark of leadership and of character.

The challenges in Afghanistan are in many ways as complex or more complex than those that General Petraeus inherited when he assumed command in Iraq. Recent news reports indicate that progress in Afghanistan is spotty. Casualties among U.S., ISAF,

and Afghan security forces are higher. While some normal activities have returned to Helmand, insurgent intimidation and violence continues to threaten governance and development in the south. The Karzai government has yet to deliver services to win allegiances locally. And recent reports suggest that Afghanistan's Tajik and Uzbek minorities are concerned about President Karzai's overtures to Taliban leaders through Pakistani intermediaries.

At our hearing 2 weeks ago, General Petraeus emphasized that, quote, "a counterinsurgency operation is a roller coaster experience," but he said that, in his view, the trajectory, quote, "has generally been upward, despite the tough losses."

I have long believed that the number-one mission in Afghanistan is building the capacity of the Afghan security forces to be able to take increasing responsibility for their country's security. General Petraeus said, 2 weeks ago, that increasing the size and capacity of the Afghan security forces is, quote, "central to achieving progress in Afghanistan."

U.S. and ISAF forces need to focus their resources and energy on this effort. There is a significant shortfall, still, of trainers to provide basic instruction to Afghan recruits, and of mentors to embed with Afghan units in the field.

Building the capacity of the Afghan security forces to provide security is not simply what we seek, it's what the Afghan people seek. That's what we were told by a hundred or so elders at a shura in southern Afghanistan last year. And when we asked them what they wanted the United States to do, they told us that we should train and equip the Afghan army to provide for their country's security, and then we should depart.

The 1,600 delegates to the Afghanistan Consultative Peace Jirga at the beginning of this month adopted a resolution calling on the international community to, quote, "expedite" the training and equipping of the Afghan security forces so that they can gain the capacity to provide security for their own country and people.

I remain deeply concerned, however, by reports that there are relatively few Afghan army troops in the lead in operations in the south, where fighting is heaviest. The Afghan army now numbers around 120,000 troops, including over 70,000 combat troops. In the past, ISAF reported that over half of Afghan battalions were capable of conducting operations either independently or with coalition support. However, a recent report, released just today by the special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction, finds that the capability rating system used by the training mission, quote, "overstated operational capabilities of the Afghan security forces, and has not provided reliable or consistent assessments."

ISAF agreed with that report and recently has adopted a new standard for measuring Afghan capability by which measure around one-third of Afghan units are now determined to be effective, with coalition support, in conducting operations. However, even under that new measure, there are significantly more Afghan army troops that could lead operations in Kandahar than the 7250 Afghan troops now in Kandahar. The level of Afghan security forces in Kandahar, both army and police, is scheduled to rise to only 8500 personnel by the fall, according to a chart provided by General McChrystal last month. The influx of ISAF forces in and

around Kandahar will outpace the increase in Afghan forces by October, according to that same chart.

The current slower pace of operations in Kandahar provides the opportunity to get more Afghan combat-capable forces south, to take the lead in operations there. Having the Afghan army in the lead in operations in Kandahar is the insurgency's worst nightmare. The Afghan army enjoys the support of the Afghan people, and they are strong fighters.

Meanwhile, according to a recent New York Times survey, only 40 percent of Afghans have a favorable view of the United States. And, General Petraeus, I hope you will promptly review the deployment of capable Afghan security forces to try to get more Afghan troops down to the south and in the lead in operations there before those operations are accelerated in the field in the fall.

Finally, a few words about the July 2011 date set by the President for the beginning of reductions in our combat presence in Afghanistan. That decision also made clear that the pace of those reductions would be dependent on circumstances at that time, and that the United States would continue a strong strategic commitment to Afghanistan.

That July 2011 date imparts a necessary sense of urgency to Afghan leaders about the need to take on principal responsibility for their country's security. We saw in Iraq the importance of setting dates as a way of spurring action. President Bush, in November of 2008, decided to move all U.S. forces out of Iraqi cities and towns by June of 2009, and to withdraw all U.S. forces from Iraq by the end of December 2011. That decision helped focus the Iraqi government and military on the need to take principal responsibility for the security of their own country. The Afghan success and ours depends on that happening in Afghanistan, as well.

We've already seen a positive effect of setting the July 2011 date to begin reduction of our troops. Lieutenant General Caldwell, who commands our training efforts in Afghanistan, told us that, when President Obama announced the date, the Afghan leadership made a great effort to reach out to the local leaders and elders, resulting in a surge in recruits for the Afghan army. General Petraeus has said that he agrees with the President's policy, setting that July 2011 date; and indeed, he told me that, if he ceases to agree, that he would so advise his Commander in Chief, which, of course, he has a responsibility to do as a military commander.

It is my hope—and I believe that Senator McCain and other members of this committee would surely join in this—that we can vote on General Petraeus's nomination by the end, possibly, even of today, so that the full Senate can act before the July 4th break.

Senator McCain.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And let me thank our distinguished witness for joining us here today for a very unexpected and extraordinary hearing.

I want to echo the Chairman in welcoming General Petraeus's wife, Holly. We all know that General Petraeus, like all of our fighting men and women, could never do his job for our Nation without the sacrifice and support of his family. So, on behalf of our

entire committee, Mrs. Petraeus, we sincerely thank you, and we think you made a wise decision, more than 34 years ago, to accept a blind date with a young cadet. [Laughter.]

As I said in our hearing 2 weeks ago, General Petraeus, I believe you are one of our finest-ever military leaders. I hope that does not provoke the same reaction as it did then. But, seriously, we're all grateful for your willingness to answer the call of service again in yet another critical mission. You're an American hero, and I am confident that you will be quickly and overwhelmingly confirmed.

Before I go further, let me say a word of praise for another American hero, General Stanley McChrystal. He's a man of unrivaled integrity. And what is most impressive about his long record of military excellence is how much of it remains cloaked in silence. Few understand fully how General McChrystal systematically dismantled al Qaeda in Iraq, or how he began to turn around our failing war in Afghanistan. These achievements, and others like them, are the true measure of Stanley McChrystal, and they will earn him an honored place in our history.

The events that led to this hearing are unexpected and unfortunate, but they don't mean we are failing in Afghanistan. I agree with the President, that success in Afghanistan is a—quote, “a vital national interest,” and I support his decision to adopt a counterinsurgency strategy backed by more troops and civilian resources. This is the only viable path to true success, which I would define as an Afghanistan that is increasingly capable of governing itself, support—securing its people, sustaining its own development, and never again serving as a base for attacks against America and our allies. In short, the same results we are slowly seeing emerge today in Iraq.

Before heading out to Iraq 3 years ago, General Petraeus, you told this committee that the mission was, quote, “hard, but not hopeless.” I would characterize our mission in Afghanistan the same way. Nevertheless, many of the same people who were defeatist about Iraq are now saying similar things about Afghanistan. But, Afghanistan is not a lost cause. Afghans do not want the Taliban back. They're good fighters, and they want a government that works for them, and works well.

And for those who think the Karzai government is not an adequate partner, I would remind them that, in 2007, the Maliki government in Iraq was not only corrupt, it was collapsed and complicit in sectarian violence. A weak and compromised local partner is to be expected in counterinsurgency. That's why there's an insurgency. The challenge is to support and push our partners to perform better. That's what we're doing in Iraq, and that's what we can do in Afghanistan if—if we make it clear that, as long as success is possible, we will stay in Afghanistan to achieve it, as we did with Iraq, not that we will start to withdraw, no matter what, in July of 2011.

I appreciate the President's statement, last week, that July 2011 is a—simply a date to, quote, “begin a transition phase to greater Afghan responsibility.” And for those who doubt the President's desire and commitment to succeed in Afghanistan, his nomination of General Petraeus to run this war should cause them to think twice.

Still, what we need to hear from the President, what our friends and enemies in Afghanistan and the region need to hear, is that the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan will be determined solely by conditions on the ground.

Let me explain why I believe the July 2011 date is so harmful. What we're trying to do in Afghanistan, as in any counterinsurgency, is to win the loyalty of the population, to convince people, who may dislike the insurgency, but who may also distrust their government, that they should line up with us against the Taliban and al Qaeda. We're asking them to take a huge risk, and they will be far less willing to run it if they think we will begin leaving in a year. One U.S. marine put it this way about the Afghan/Shi'a encounters, quote, "That's why they won't work with us," she said, quote, "They say, 'You'll leave in 2011,' and the Taliban will chop their heads off."

The same goes for the Afghan government. We're told that setting a date to begin withdrawing would be an incentive for the Karzai administration to make better decisions, and to make them more quickly. I would argue it's having the opposite effect; it's causing Afghan leaders to hedge their bets on us. This is not only making the war harder, it's making the war longer. If the President would say that success in Afghan is our only withdrawal plan, whether we reach it before July 2011 or afterwards, he would make the war more winnable and hasten the day when our troops can come home with honor, which is what we all want.

In addition to being harmful, the July 2011 withdrawal date increasingly looks unrealistic. That date was based on assumptions made back in December about how much progress we could achieve in Afghanistan, and how quickly we could achieve it. But, war never works out the way we assume, as today's hearing reminds us all too well. Secretary Gates said, last week, quote, "I believe we are making some progress, but it is slower and harder than we anticipated." I agree. Marjah is largely "cleared" of the Taliban, but the "holding and building" is not going as well as planned. Our operation in Kandahar is getting off to a slower and more difficult start than expected. The Dutch and Canadian governments plan to withdraw, soon. And it looks increasingly unlikely that NATO will make its pledge of 10,000 troops. Meanwhile, I think it's safe to say that the performance of the Afghan government over the past 7 months is not as even or as rapid as we had hoped.

None of this is to say that we are failing, or that we will fail, in Afghanistan; it just means that we need to give our strategy the necessary time to succeed. We cannot afford to have a stay-the-course approach to starting our withdrawal in July 2011, when the facts on the ground are suggesting that we need more time.

This is all the more essential now, with General Petraeus assuming command, pending his confirmation. He has proved—he is proof that we can win wars, and we need to give him every opportunity, and remove every obstacle, to win in Afghanistan.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Senator McCain follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator McCain.
General Petraeus.

STATEMENT OF GENERAL DAVID H. PETRAEUS, USA, NOMINEE FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF GENERAL, AND TO BE COMMANDER, INTERNATIONAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE FORCE, AND COMMANDER, UNITED STATES FORCES AFGHANISTAN

General PETRAEUS. Mr. Chairman, Senator McCain, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, and thank you for the rapid scheduling of this hearing.

I am, needless to say, humbled and honored to have been nominated by the President to command the NATO International Security Assistance Force and U.S. forces in Afghanistan, and to have the opportunity, if confirmed, to continue to serve our Nation, the NATO alliance, our non-NATO coalition partners, and Afghanistan, in these new capacities.

At the outset, I want to echo your salute to the extraordinary service of Senator Robert Byrd. With his death, America clearly has lost a great patriot.

I'd like to begin this morning by also saying a few words about General Stan McChrystal, someone I've known and admired for nearly 30 years. General McChrystal has devoted his entire professional life to the defense of this Nation, and he and his family have made enormous personal sacrifices during his lengthy deployments over the past 9 years, in particular. His contributions during that time were very significant.

I can attest, for example, that the success of the surge in Iraq would not have been possible without General McChrystal's exceptional leadership of our Special Mission Unit forces there. Similarly, the development of the Joint Special Operations Command during his unprecedented tenure commanding JSOC was extraordinary, as well.

Most importantly, of course, he has made enormous contributions in leading the coalition endeavor in Afghanistan over the past year. During that time, he brought impressive vision, energy, and expertise to the effort there. He made a huge contribution to the reorientation of our strategy, and was a central figure in our efforts to get the inputs right in Afghanistan, to build the organizations needed to carry out a comprehensive civil/military counterinsurgency campaign, to get the right leaders in charge of those organizations, to develop appropriate plans and concepts, and to deploy the resources necessary to enable the implementation of those plans and concepts.

We now see some areas of progress amidst the tough fight ongoing in Afghanistan. Considerable credit for that must go to Stan McChrystal.

As we take stock of the situation in Afghanistan, it is important to remember why we are there. We should never forget that the September 11 attacks were planned in southern Afghanistan, and that the initial training of the attackers was carried out in camps in Afghanistan before the attackers moved on to Germany and then on to U.S. flight schools.

It was, of course, in response to those attacks that a U.S.-led coalition entered Afghanistan, in late 2001, and defeated al Qaeda and the Taliban elements that allowed al Qaeda to establish its headquarters and training camps in Afghanistan.

In the subsequent years, however, the extremists were able to regroup, with al Qaeda establishing new sanctuaries in the tribal areas of Pakistan, and the Taliban and its affiliates reentering Afghanistan, in an effort to reestablish the control they once had in much of the country.

In light of those developments, our task in Afghanistan is clear. Indeed, President Obama has explained America's vital national interests there, "We will not," he has stated, "tolerate a safe haven for terrorists who want to destroy Afghan security from within and launch attacks against innocent men, women, and children in our country and around the world."

In short, we cannot allow al Qaeda or other transnational extremist elements to once again establish sanctuaries from which they can launch attacks on our homeland or on our allies.

Achieving that objective, however, requires that we not only counter the resurgent Taliban elements who allowed such sanctuaries in the past, we must also help our Afghan partners develop their security forces and governance capacity so that they can, over time, take on the tasks of securing their country and seeing to the needs of their people.

The United States is not alone in seeing the task in Afghanistan as a vital national interest. Indeed, 46 countries, including our own, are providing forces to the ISAF coalition, and others, like Japan, provide vital economic assistance.

Earlier this year, our NATO allies and other coalition partners committed well over 9,000 additional troopers to the effort; approximately 60 percent of those additional forces are currently in place, and, when the rest are deployed, they'll bring the number of non-U.S. forces in Afghanistan to over 50,000. That expansion takes place as we are in the final months of deploying the 30,000 additional U.S. troopers, a deployment that is slightly ahead of schedule, and that will bring the total number of U.S. servicemembers in Afghanistan to nearly 100,000 by the end of August. Notably, this number will be more than three times the number of U.S. forces on the ground in early 2009.

Complementing the military buildup has been the tripling of the U.S. civilian structure in Afghanistan with substantial additional numbers still deploying. This is essential for, as the President has made clear, the campaign in Afghanistan must be a fully integrated civil/military effort, one that includes an unshakable commitment to teamwork among all elements of the U.S. Government, as well as unshakable commitment to teamwork with members of other NATO and coalition governments and the United Nations assistance mission in Afghanistan, as well as, of course, members of the Afghan Government itself. I will seek to contribute to such teamwork and to unity of effort among all participants.

We know, in fact, that we can achieve such unity of effort, because we've done it before. During my more than 19 months in command of the Multinational Force Iraq, I worked very closely with Ambassador Ryan Crocker, members of the U.S. Embassy, the United Nations Special Representative, and representatives of the embassies of key coalition partners, and we all worked closely together with our Iraqi partners.

I look forward to working just as closely with Ambassador Karl Eikenberry and the U.S. Embassy in Kabul; Ambassador Mark Sedwill, the NATO senior civilian representative; Staffan de Mistura, the Special Representative of the U.N. Secretary General, the same position he held in Baghdad; Ambassador Vygaudas Usackas, the EU Special Representative; and, most importantly, of course, with President Karzai and members of the Afghan government. Indeed, I've talked, in recent days, with all of these members of the team, including President Karzai, as well as with Ambassador Holbrooke, the U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan. We are all firmly united in seeking to forge unity of effort.

As I noted in my testimony before this committee 2 weeks ago, I was part of the process that helped formulate the President's strategy for Afghanistan, and I support and agree with his new policy. During its development, I offered my forthright military advice, and I have assured the President that I will do the same as we conduct assessments over the course of the months ahead. He, in turn, assured me that he expects and wants me to provide that character of advice.

As I also explained to this committee 2 weeks ago, I specifically agreed with the messages of greater commitment and greater urgency that the President expressed in his address at West Point in December, when he announced the new policy. As you'll recall, the greater commitment was explained in terms of the additional 30,000 U.S. forces, the tripling of the number of U.S. civilians, and the funding for an additional 100,000 Afghan security force members. The greater urgency was highlighted by the President announcing the intent to begin a process, in July 2011, of transitioning tasks to Afghan forces and officials, and of beginning what the President termed "a responsible drawdown of the U.S. surge forces," with the pace of both the transition of tasks and the drawdown of forces to be based on conditions on the ground.

It is important to note the President's reminder, in recent days, that July 2011 will mark the beginning of a process, not the date when the U.S. heads for the exits and turns out the lights. As he explained, this past Sunday, in fact, we'll need to provide assistance to Afghanistan for a long time to come.

Moreover, as President Karzai has recognized, and as a number of allied leaders noted at the recent G-20 summit, it is going to be a number of years before Afghan forces can truly handle the security tasks in Afghanistan on their home—on their own. The commitment to Afghanistan is necessarily, therefore, an enduring one, and neither the Taliban nor Afghan and Pakistani partners should doubt that.

Our efforts in Afghanistan have, appropriately, focused on protecting the population. This is, needless to say, of considerable importance, for, in counterinsurgency operations, the human terrain is the decisive terrain. The results in recent months have been notable. Indeed, over the last 12 weeks, the number of innocent civilians killed in the course of military operations has been substantially lower than it was during the same period last year. And I will continue the emphasis on reducing the loss of innocent civilian life to an absolute minimum in the course of military operations.

Focusing on securing the people does not, however, mean that we don't go after the enemy. In fact, protecting the population inevitably requires killing, capturing, or turning the insurgents. Our forces have been doing that, and we will continue to do that. In fact, our troopers and our Afghan partners have been very much taking the fight to the enemy in recent months. Since the beginning of April alone, more than 130 middle- and upper-level Taliban and other extremist-element leaders have been killed or captured, and thousands of their rank-and-file members have been taken off the battlefield. Together with our Afghan partners, we will continue to pursue, relentlessly, the enemies of the new Afghanistan in the months and years ahead.

On a related note, I want to assure the mothers and fathers of those fighting in Afghanistan that I see it as a moral imperative to bring all assets to bear to protect our men and women in uniform and the Afghan security forces with whom ISAF troopers are fighting, shoulder to shoulder. Those on the ground must have all the support they need when they are in a tough situation. This is so important that I have discussed it with President Karzai, Afghan Defense Minister Wardak, and Afghan Interior Minister, Bismullah Kahn, newly approved yesterday, since my nomination to be COMISAF, and they are in full agreement with me on this.

I mention this because I am keenly aware of concerns by some of our troopers on the ground about the application of our rules of engagement and the tactical directive. They should know that I will look very hard at this issue.

Along with you and other members of this committee, Mr. Chairman, I recognize that enduring success in Afghanistan will require the development of Afghan national security forces in sufficient numbers and sufficient quality. This is, of course, hugely important and hugely challenging. Indeed, helping to train and equip host-nation forces in the midst of an insurgency is akin to building an advanced aircraft while it is in flight, while it is being designed, and while it is being shot at. There is nothing easy about it. But, our efforts in this important area have been overhauled in the past year, and those efforts are now broadly on track, for the first time, to achieve overall approved growth goals and to approve—improve Afghan security force quality, as well.

Indeed, Afghan security force development has been advanced considerably by partnering efforts that were expanded under General McChrystal's command by the establishment of the NATO Training Mission Afghanistan and by the appointment of Lieutenant General Bill Caldwell to command that organization.

Despite the progress in recent months in Afghan security force development, there is considerable work, nonetheless, to be done to reduce attrition further and to develop effective leaders, especially with respect to the Afghan National Police. Further progress will take even greater partnering, additional training improvements, fuller manning of the training and mentoring missions, and expanded professional education opportunities. And initiatives are being pursued in each of these areas.

Recent salary and benefits initiatives are helping to improve recruiting and retention of Afghan security forces. Training capacity has been increased significantly, and the density of trainers to

trainees has been increased from one trainer per 79 trainees to one trainer for 30 trainees. And the unprecedented intensity of our teamwork with the Afghan forces is also beginning to show results.

Today, Afghan military headquarters typically are colocated with ISAF unit headquarters, sometimes even sharing the same operating centers. And nearly 85 percent of the Afghan National Army is now fully partnered with ISAF forces for operations in the field. In short, ISAF and Afghan forces train together, plan operations together, and fight together.

Furthermore, I should note that Afghan forces are now in the lead in Kabul and in a number of other areas. In such cases, Afghan units are now the supported forces, operating with significant assistance from ISAF, to be sure, but already shouldering the responsibilities of leadership.

An excellent example of this was the recovery operation for the Pamir Airways crash north of Kabul last month. Afghan border police found the site. Recovery operations were planned, coordinated, and executed jointly by the Afghan Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior at the Afghan National Military Coordination Center. The recovery operation, at an elevation of more than 12,500 feet, was executed by Afghan helicopter crews and Afghan commandos. Even the media, in information issues, were handled by Afghan personnel. That case is, to be sure, not the norm throughout Afghanistan. Nonetheless, the ANSF are very much in the fight and sacrificing for their country, and nothing reflects this more than the fact that their losses are typically several times ours.

There is no question that levels of violence in Afghanistan have increased significantly over the last several years. Moreover, the Taliban and its affiliates had, until this year, steadily been expanding the areas they control and influence. This year, however, ISAF has achieved progress in several locations. The initial main effort has been in the central Helmand River Valley, and Afghan, U.S., and U.K. forces have expanded security there, though, predictably, the enemy has fought back as we have taken away his sanctuaries in the districts of Marjah, Nad-i-Ali, Nawa, Lashkar, and elsewhere. Nothing has been easy in those operations, but, 6 months ago, we could not have walked through the market in Marjah, as I was able to do with the district governor there, 2 months ago.

We are now increasing our focus on Kandahar Province, an area of considerable importance to the Taliban. We're working hard to ensure that our operations there are based on a strong, integrated civil-military, and Afghan-international approach to security, governance, and development. So-called "shaping operations," including a high tempo of targeted Special Forces operations, have been ongoing for some months. President Karzai and his ministers have also conducted shura councils and a number of other political initiatives focused on increasing the sense of inclusivity and transparency in the province, elements of the way ahead that are essential, and have been stressed by President Karzai.

In the months ahead, we'll see an additional U.S. brigade, from the great 101st Airborne Division, deploy into the districts around Kandahar City, where it will operate together with an additional Afghan army brigade. We'll see the introduction of additional Afghan police and U.S. military police to secure the city itself, along

with other U.S. forces and civilians who will work together with the impressive Canadian-led Provincial Reconstruction Team that has been operating in the city.

The combination of all these initiatives is intended to slowly but surely establish the foundation of security that can allow the development of viable local political structures, enable the improvement of basic services, and help Afghan leaders and local governance achieve legitimacy and greater support by the Kandaharis.

While relentless pursuit of the Taliban will be critical in Kandahar and elsewhere, we know, from Iraq and other counterinsurgency experiences, that we cannot kill or capture our way out of an industrial-strength insurgency like that in Afghanistan. Clearly, as many insurgents and citizens as possible need to be convinced to become part of the solution rather than a continuing part of the problem.

The National Consultative Peace Jirga, conducted in Kabul several weeks ago, was an important initiative in this arena. And the reintegration policy that President Karzai signed today—and I talked to him about it on the way here this morning—will be critical to the effort to convince reconcilable elements of the insurgency to lay down their weapons and support the new Afghanistan. We look forward to working with our Afghan and diplomatic partners in implementing this newly signed policy.

Recent months in Afghanistan have, as you noted, Mr. Chairman, seen tough fighting and tough casualties. This was expected. Indeed, as I noted in testimony last year and again earlier this year, the going inevitably gets tougher before it gets easier when a counterinsurgency operation tries to reverse insurgent momentum.

My sense is that the tough fighting will continue; indeed, it may get more intense in the next few months. As we take away the enemy's safe havens and reduce the enemy's freedom of action, the insurgents will fight back.

In the face of the tough fighting, however, we must remember that progress is possible in Afghanistan, because we have already seen a fair amount of it, in a variety of different forms, beyond the recent security gains. For example, nearly 7 million Afghan children are now in school, as opposed to less than 1 million, a decade ago, under Taliban control. Immunization rates for children have gone up substantially and are now in the 70- to 90- percent range nationwide. Cell phones are ubiquitous in a country that had virtually none during the Taliban days, though the Taliban does try to shut down some of those towers at night; and does it, as well.

Kabul is a bustling, busy city, as are Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif, and Jalalabad. Roads and bridges and other infrastructure have been repaired or built. Commerce is returning to those parts of Helmand where ISAF and Afghan forces are present.

Even in places where governance remains weak, innovative efforts, like the Afghan government's National Solidarity Program, supported by American and international civilians, as well as by our troopers, have helped enable local shura councils to choose their own development priorities, and receive modest cash grants to pursue them.

Enabling further such progress, though, and successfully implementing the President's policy, will require that our forces in—that our work in Afghanistan is fully resourced. It is essential for the conduct of this mission, for example, that the supplemental funding measure now before Congress be passed. This committee and the Senate have passed it, and it was heartening to hear Speaker Pelosi's call, last week, for the House to do the same, expeditiously.

Beyond that, as always, I also ask for your continued support for the Commanders Emergency Response Program. CERP-funded projects are often the most responsive and effective means to address a local community's needs; indeed, CERP is often the only tool to address pressing requirements in areas where security is challenged. Our commanders value CERP enormously, and they appreciate your appropriating funds for CERP each year.

As I close, I'd like to once again note the extraordinary work being done by our troopers on the ground in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere around the world. Our young men and women truly deserve the recognition they have earned as America's new greatest generation. There is no question that they comprise the finest, most combat-hardened military in our Nation's history.

There is also no question that they and their families have made enormous sacrifices since September 11, in particular. Many of them have deployed on multiple tours to perform difficult missions under challenging circumstances against tough, even barbaric, enemies. We cannot, in my view, ever thank our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coastguardsmen enough, but what Americans have done to support those in uniform and our deployed civilians has been truly wonderful. Indeed, nothing has meant more to our troopers and their families than the appreciation of those here at home.

As you noted, Mr. Chairman, my wife, Holly, is here with me today. She is a symbol of the strength and dedication of families around the globe who wait at home for their loved ones while they're engaged in critical work in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere. She has hung tough while I've been deployed for over 5 and a half years since September 11. So have untold other spouses, children, and loved ones, as their troopers have deployed and continued to raise their right hands, time and time again. Clearly, our families are the unsung heroes of the long campaigns on which we have been embarked over the past decade.

One of America's greatest Presidents, Teddy Roosevelt, once observed that, "Far and away the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing." There are currently nearly 140,000 coalition troopers and over 235,000 Afghan security force members engaged in hard work very much worth doing in Afghanistan. If I am confirmed by the Senate, it will be a great privilege to soldier with them in that hard work that is so worth doing in that country.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of General Petraeus follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, General Petraeus.

Let me, since we now have a quorum, take care of some important committee business. I would ask the committee now to consider a list of 3,839 pending military nominations, included in this

list are the nominations of General Raymond Odierno to be Commander, U.S. Joint Forces Command, and Lieutenant General Lloyd Austin to be Commander, U.S. Forces Iraq. These nominations have been before the committee the required length of time.

Is there a motion to favorably report those nominations?

Senator LIEBERMAN. So moved.

Chairman LEVIN. And a second?

Senator MCCAIN. Second.

Chairman LEVIN. All those in favor, say aye. [Chorus of ayes.]

Opposed, nay. [No response.]

The motions carry.

Now, General, as you know, we ask standard questions of all nominees that come before us. The standard questions are as follows:

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

General PETRAEUS. Yes.

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

General PETRAEUS. I do.

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

General PETRAEUS. I have not.

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

General PETRAEUS. I will.

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

General PETRAEUS. I will.

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

General PETRAEUS. Yes.

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

General PETRAEUS. Yes.

Chairman LEVIN. Finally, 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 PETRAEUS. I do.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Let us try a 7-minute first round.

General, you've commented on these questions in your testimony, and I want to ask them again, to get very clear, direct answers to them.

Two fundamental elements of the Afghanistan strategy that the President announced in December 2009 are, first, a surge of 30,000 additional U.S. troops by the end of the summer, to help regain the initiative; and, second, the setting of a July 2011 date for the beginning of reduction in our combat presence in Afghanistan, with

the pace of a reasonable drawdown to be determined by the circumstances at that time.

Do you agree with the President's policy?

General PETRAEUS. I do.

Chairman LEVIN. Do you agree that the setting of that July 2011 date to begin reductions signals urgency to Afghan leaders that they must more and more take responsibility for their country's security which is important for success of the mission in Afghanistan?

General PETRAEUS. I do.

Chairman LEVIN. A report released this morning, the special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction concluded that the way ISAF has been measuring the capability of the Afghan security forces was flawed. The ISAF command basically agreed and—basically agreed, and has revised its approach for measuring the capability of Afghan forces. With the revised approach, ISAF figures, now, that 30 percent of Afghan forces are assessed to be effective, with coalition support.

At the end of May, there were some 120,000 Afghan army troops, including at least 70,000 combat troops. Taking just this lower combat troop level, that would mean that around 25,000 Afghan troops can operate effectively, with coalition support. Yet, according to figures provided in your answers to prehearing questions, General, the Afghan army has only around 7250 Afghan army soldiers present for duty in Kandahar Province, which is so central to success in Afghanistan. Now, that's less than one-third of the effective Afghan forces that are available.

Would you agree, first of all, that the Afghan army has broad popular support, and that the Afghan people want the Afghan army to be taking the lead, where possible, to provide security?

General PETRAEUS. I would.

Chairman LEVIN. And would you also agree the Afghan army are excellent fighters?

General PETRAEUS. By and large. Again, I—you'd need to walk your way around the country and discuss them a little bit more granularly, but that's generally correct.

Chairman LEVIN. As a general—

General PETRAEUS. Yes.

Chairman LEVIN.—statement.

Do you agree that it is in our interest, and it's in the interest of a successful outcome in Afghanistan, to increase the number of Afghan units who can lead, to take the lead in operations?

General PETRAEUS. Absolutely.

Chairman LEVIN. And why is that?

General PETRAEUS. Well, we want them doing the fighting, rather than us, obviously.

Chairman LEVIN. And what about the reaction of the Afghan people to the—

General PETRAEUS. That's another piece of it. Again, we want Afghan ownership of Afghan problems, whether it's security problems, political problems, economic problems, you name it. And that's part and parcel of that, obviously.

Chairman LEVIN. General, will you review the—and I'm not going to keep asking you "if confirmed," because I'm going to as-

sume that, with all these questions—so, I’m going to say, “when confirmed,” will you review the—you’re not allowed to assume confirmation, by the way, but I am allowed to assume confirmation—[Laughter.]

So, when confirmed, will you review the deployments of forces in Afghanistan, to see how more Afghan army and police forces can be brought to—brought in to increase the number of Afghan security forces in Kandahar, to take the lead in that campaign?

General PETRAEUS. If confirmed, I will do that, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

General PETRAEUS. If not, I’ll do it as the Central Command commander. [Laughter.]

Chairman LEVIN. One way or another, we’re going to count on you to do that. [Laughter.]

Earlier this month, General McChrystal announced that he was slowing the operations of Afghan and ISAF forces in and around Kandahar to allow more time for discussions with local leaders, and to try to get more of their buy-in, as well, try to get better governance, as well. ISAF taking additional time in Kandahar should mean that we will have more Afghan-led operations in a few months. And I’m just wondering whether or not you would agree that, since we have slowed, somewhat, the pace of operations of Afghan and ISAF forces in and around Kandahar, that that will present an opportunity, at least, to bring in more Afghan forces capable of leading in the Kandahar campaign during this period.

General PETRAEUS. Well, I—in fact, Mr. Chairman, as I mentioned in my opening statement, there is a plan to deploy an additional Afghan army brigade to partner with the additional U.S. brigade, and also additional Afghan police battalions and individual police, as well.

Chairman LEVIN. And if there are possibilities to increase the numbers of Afghan troops that can lead, above that plan, will you also take a look at that?

General PETRAEUS. I will.

Chairman LEVIN. Do you know offhand how many Afghan troops there will be in Kandahar by September?

General PETRAEUS. I think that it will be in the range of 7,500 to 8,000 at that time.

Chairman LEVIN. And what about in Helmand?

General PETRAEUS. I—let me answer that for the record—

Chairman LEVIN. All right. Let me—

General PETRAEUS.—Mr. Chairman.

[The information referred to follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Let me mention to you—and that’s fine—the figures that your office provided to my staff last evening were somewhat surprising in that regard, and I want you just to doublecheck those figures for us.

General PETRAEUS. Will do that.

[The information referred to follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. They showed that there is a total of 40,000 Afghan and coalition security forces in Helmand, while there’s only a total of about 11,000 in Kandahar. And if you could doublecheck those figures and explain why there’s such a—so many fewer combined forces in Kandahar than in Helmand, since Kandahar is real-

ly going to be the central effort—if you could take a look at those numbers and explain that, for the record, I'd appreciate it.

General PETRAEUS. Happy to do that.

[The information referred to follow:]

Chairman LEVIN. The press reported, last week, that Pakistani officials have approached the Karzai government with a proposal that includes delivering the Haqqani network, which runs a major part of the insurgency in Afghanistan and is an ally of al Qaeda into a power-sharing arrangement.

Now, President Obama and CIA Director Panetta have expressed skepticism about the likelihood that Taliban leaders would accept such a proposal, but the President also noted that attempts to draw Afghanistan and Pakistan interests closer together is a useful step.

I'm wondering whether you share Director Panetta's skepticism about the potential for Pakistan to broker a reconciliation deal between the Taliban leadership and the Afghan government at this time.

General PETRAEUS. Let me just say, first of all, I—just an interesting item. In talking to President Karzai in the vehicle on the way over here, he assured me that he has not met with a Haqqani group leader, by the way, in recent days or—I think, at any time.

Now, with respect to Pakistani involvement in some form of reconciliation agreement, I think that that is essential. Now, whether that is possible, such an agreement, I think is going to depend on a number of factors that will play out over the course of the summer, including creating a sense, among the Taliban, that they are going to get hammered in the field, and perhaps should look at some options.

Now, we have already seen cases where lower- and mid- level Taliban leaders have, indeed, sought to reintegrate, and there have been more in recent days. Small numbers, here and there. The reintegration decree, that was approved by President Karzai today, will help codify the process for this. And that should help. Again, as you'll recall in Iraq, we did a substantial amount of reconciliation. But, whether or not very senior leaders can meet the very clear conditions that the Afghan government has laid down for reconciliation, I think, is somewhat in question. So, in that regard, I agree with Director Panetta.

But, clearly we want to forge a partnership—or further the partnership that has been developing between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Those countries are always going to be neighbors, and helping them develop a constructive relationship would be an important contribution.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, General.

Senator McCain.

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you, General. And just to follow up, obviously the key to success in reconciling with the Taliban is to first convince the Taliban that they cannot succeed, militarily, in prevailing. It's also true that the majority of the people of Afghanistan are in opposition to a Taliban return to power. Is that correct?

General PETRAEUS. It is.

Senator MCCAIN. There's no doubt about that.

General PETRAEUS. There's no love lost for the Taliban. They remember the barbaric activities, the oppressive social practices, and the extremist ideology practiced by the Taliban, and there's—

Senator MCCAIN. So, you could interpret—

General PETRAEUS.—no love for them.

Senator MCCAIN.—that, in some ways, as an advantage over the situation you found in Iraq at the beginning of the surge.

General PETRAEUS. That's correct, Senator, although over time we were able to hang around the neck of al Qaeda in Iraq the same kinds of labels—extremist ideology, oppressive practices, and so forth. And indeed, those weighed them down every time they carried out another act of indiscriminate violence, as the Taliban have done. And we obviously will work with our Afghan partners to ensure that the Afghan people know who has been killing the vast majority of the civilians in that country.

Senator MCCAIN. Is the—is Marjah going as well now as we hoped last December?

General PETRAEUS. Probably not as well as the optimistic assessments. Now, again, I think I'm very clearly on the record—last year, this year, and so forth—in stating that this is going to be hard, and it was going to be hard all the time. So, the—

Senator MCCAIN. Right.

General PETRAEUS.—truth is, I'm not surprised by—

Senator MCCAIN. I'm not—

General PETRAEUS.—these kinds of challenges.

Senator MCCAIN.—either. And in Kandahar, we are—we're not where we had wanted to be 7 months ago, and the Afghan government isn't performing as well as we had expected. And would you—wouldn't you agree with Secretary Gates' comment, quote, "We are making some progress, but it is slower and harder than we anticipated"?

General PETRAEUS. I would

Senator MCCAIN. Do you agree with that statement?

General PETRAEUS. I would, Senator.

Senator MCCAIN. So, that argues, then, for a reassessment of the July 2011 commitment to begin a withdrawal.

Let me tell you why Americans are confused, and why our allies are discouraged and our enemies are encouraged. As short a time ago as Sunday before last, the President's chief advisor, Rahm Emanuel, said, quote—and I quote, just last—week ago last Sunday—quote, "Everybody knows there's a firm date. What will be determined that date, or going into that date, will be the scale and scope of that reduction, but there will be no doubt that's going to happen. The—July 2011 is not changing. Everybody agreed on that date."

David Axelrod, June 13th, "We—he is committed to begin that process of withdrawal in July of next year, and that is—continues to be the plan, and we're going to pursue that on that schedule."

Mr. Alter, in his book, said, "This would not"—quote, "This would not be a 5- to 7-year nation-building commitment, much less an open-ended one. The timeframe the military was offering for both getting in and getting out must shrink dramatically, he"—Obama—said. There would be no nationwide counterinsurgency strategy. The Pentagon was to present a targeted plan for protecting popu-

lation centers, training Afghan security forces, and beginning a real, not a token, withdrawal within 18 months of the escalation.”

That’s why people are confused, I would say, General. And I know you’re put in the position where you have to say that it’s based on conditions.

Last January, a few of us were in Arghandab Province. We met an old tribal leader, who entertained us with stories, how they beat the Russians. And he turned to me, and he said, “Are you Americans staying, or are you leaving, like you did last time?”

Today’s New York Times, a senior—I quote from the article in the New York Times—“A senior American intelligence official said the Taliban had effectively used their deadline to their advantage. He added that the deadline had encouraged Pakistani security services to,” quote, “‘hedge their bets and continue supporting groups like the Haqqani network.’” Quote, “‘They’ve been burned before, and they’ve seen this movie before,’ the official said.”

That’s the problem here, in whether we are going to prevail and convince the people of Afghanistan to come over to our side and to stand up against the Taliban, rather than, as the military person said, “They say you’ll leave in 2011. The Taliban will chop their heads off.” It’s frustrating.

General, at any time during the deliberations that the military shared with the President when he went through the decision-making process, was there a recommendation from you or anyone in the military that we set a date of July 2011?

General PETRAEUS. There was not.

Senator MCCAIN. There was not. By any military person that you know of.

General PETRAEUS. Not that I’m aware of.

Senator MCCAIN. I thank you.

So, do you think that it’s of concern, the situation with Pakistan and their—and the ISI, working—continue to—working with the Taliban?

General PETRAEUS. Well, again, what we have to always figure out, with Pakistan, Senator, is, Are they working with the Taliban to support the Taliban or to recruit sources in the Taliban? And that’s the difficulty, frankly, in trying to assess what the ISI is doing in some of their activities in the federally Administered Tribal Areas, in contacts with the Haqqani network or the Afghan Taliban.

There are no questions about the longstanding links. Let’s remember that we funded the ISI to build these organizations, when they were the Mujahideen and helping to expel the Soviets from Afghanistan. And so, certainly residual links would not be a surprise. The question is what the character of those links is, and what the activities are behind them.

Senator MCCAIN. Obviously, one of the biggest problems we’re facing is corruption. And there’s a Wall Street Journal article of June 28th, “Corruption Suspected in Airlift of Billions in Cash from Kabul.” Do you have anything to tell us about that, what is one of the more disturbing news reports that I have seen?

General PETRAEUS. Well, there have been actions taken—this spring, in fact—by the Afghan government, the establishment of new anticorruption bodies, the prosecution of certain cases, and

also, on our side, for example, the establishment of a Task Force 2010, headed by a two-star naval contracting officer who—she commanded the Joint Contracting Command that supported us in Iraq, which is going to examine where the contract money is going—not only who are the subcontractors, but who are the subs to the subcontractors, and so forth.

President Karzai has committed to supporting this effort. I've discussed it with him in the past, and we will obviously focus on it intently, if confirmed.

Senator MCCAIN. I'm sure you may have seen that the—this committee, the majority decided that we would cut a billion dollars from aid to Iraq military and put in earmarked porkbarrel projects. Is that of concern to you, that they would cut half of the necessary aid to the Iraqi military?

General PETRAEUS. It is of concern, Senator. We obviously contributed to the development of that particular request. We think that that money is needed at a critical time in the transition in Iraq, where we are transitioning from Defense lead on a number of these different programs to State Department lead. To do that, the Afghan—or, the—correction—the Iraqi Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defense forces have to be at certain levels so that that transition can be successful. And indeed, therefore, there is concern about that. And I know that General Odierno and the Secretary have expressed that, as well.

Senator MCCAIN. I thank you, General. And again, we're deeply appreciative of your willingness to serve, and your entire family.

General PETRAEUS. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator McCain.

Senator Reed.

Senator REED. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Again, thank you, General, not only for your testimony today, but your service to the Army and to the Nation.

In the course of your colloquy with Senator McCain, you indicated that you did not make a recommendation with respect to a deadline. But, your public says—statements indicate you support that approach. Is that correct?

General PETRAEUS. That's correct.

Senator REED. So that you're fully supportive of the President's policy, including beginning a transition, based upon the condition on the ground, in July of 2011.

General PETRAEUS. Let me be very clear, if I could, Senator. And not only did I say that I supported it, I said that I agreed with it. This is, again, an agreement that was made back, of course, in the fall of last year, based on projections about conditions that we hoped would obtain, that we were going to strive to achieve in Afghanistan, a full year from now. So, that was, you know, an 18-month-or-more projection at that time.

As I mentioned in my opening statement, I saw this, most importantly, as the message of urgency to complement the message of enormous additional commitment.

Let's remember that it wasn't just this 30,000 additional forces. The President—and, actually, previous President had started some deployment of additional forces before he left office. But, we started with some 30–31,000 U.S. forces in Afghanistan in 2009, and we

will now be approaching 100,000 by the time—the deployment of the final 30,000. So, this is a substantial additional commitment complemented, again, by a message of urgency.

Senator REED. And in looking forward to next year, when there is a conditions-based redeployment of forces, we are starting at a much, much higher base than we've ever had in that country, in the 8 or 9 years that we engaged. Is that correct?

General PETRAEUS. And it's not just our forces. There will actually be more NATO forces, and, more importantly, there will be substantially more Afghan forces. But, again, all based on projections—

Senator REED. Right.

General PETRAEUS.—right now.

Senator REED. One of the other aspects of the timeline is—particularly if the Taliban thought that this was sort of just playing out the—our hand and leaving—that the—it raises a question of, Why would they be so active on the ground, militarily?

General PETRAEUS. Well, they're active on the—

Senator REED. Their behavior suggests that they believe now that we're staying, but we're winning—

General PETRAEUS. Well—

Senator REED.—or at least we can win.

General PETRAEUS. It's actually a great point. The reason they're active on the ground, militarily—probably a couple of reasons. One is, they're fighting to retain safe havens and sanctuaries that they've been able to establish in recent years. And again, when we take them away, they must retake them. Marjah was the nexus of the Taliban. It had IED-producing “factories,” if you will, supplies, headquarters, medical facilities, and the illegal narcotics industry, all tied into one. They lost a great deal when they lost Marjah, and it's not surprising that they fight back.

Now, the other reason, though, is, they're also fighting to break our will. This is a contest of wills. And they can sense concern in various capitals around the world. And, of course, they want to increase that concern.

Senator REED. Well, they're also, I think, understand—and I'll ask the question—that, given our very aggressive operations, that if we are—if we succeed in the next several months, their ability to be influential within Afghanistan is severely diminished. Is that correct?

General PETRAEUS. It is correct. And again, they can feel—we have insights, as we say—intelligence—into when they're feeling pressure, and they are feeling pressure right now, there's no question about it—more in certain areas than others, to be sure, and not to say they're still not trying to expand, in certain areas, also. Again, this is—as I mentioned, 2 weeks ago, it is a roller coaster existence. There are setbacks for every small success. But, what you're trying to do is determine if the trajectory is generally upward. And that's, indeed, how we see it.

Senator REED. Going back to Marjah, civilians have returned after the initial fighting, is that correct?

General PETRAEUS. That is correct.

Senator REED. That they're conducting agricultural activities and—

General PETRAEUS. They are.

Senator REED.—permissible activities.

General PETRAEUS. They are. As I mentioned, I walked through Marjah, about 2 months ago, with the district governor. The market was reopened. We sat there, ate bread that was produced right there—it was great bread—and chatted with the locals. Had a lot of security around, of course, but also had dozens, if not hundreds, of locals around.

Senator REED. Let me turn to an issue that you alluded to in your opening statement, General, and that is the rules of engagement.

General PETRAEUS. Right.

Senator REED. Could you elaborate? Because this is a very sensitive balance between providing effective fire support for troops in contact, and also minimizing, hopefully eliminating, collateral casualties. So, could you comment on it?

General PETRAEUS. Okay. We must remain committed to reducing the loss of innocent civilian life to an absolute minimum in the course of military operations. Tragically, inevitably, there will be civilian casualties in the course of operations. Indeed, the Taliban will try to create situations in which that is the result. And that is—it's essential. Again, and President Karzai knows that I will be—remain committed, continue the commitment that General McChrystal made in this area.

Now, we have rules of engagement. Those are fairly standard. We also have a tactical directive that is designed to guide the employment, in particular, of large casualty-producing devices—bombs, close air support, attack helicopters, and so forth. And that's an area we have to look very closely at, because, of course, if you drop a bomb on a house, if you're not sure who's in it, you can kill a lot of innocent civilians in a hurry.

Having said that, as I mentioned in my opening statement, we have to be absolutely certain that the implementation of the tactical directive and the rules of engagement is even throughout the force, that there are not leaders at certain levels that are perhaps making this more bureaucratic or more restrictive than necessary when our troopers and our Afghan partners are in a tough spot. And when they are in a tough spot, it's a moral imperative that we use everything we have to ensure that they get out of it.

Senator REED. Thank you.

Let me—one of the persistent issues here is the lack of governmental capacity on the part of the Afghans. In Marjah, the criticism is, we cleared it, civilians have come back, but the Afghan government hasn't come back or established itself. And I know this gets into that gray area between civ-mil and your mil and there are civilians are there. But, one of the structural defects within the Afghani government is highly centralized government, and all the action is in the provinces, which needs much more effective provincial support, independent—or more independent governance. Is that an issue that you and Ambassador Eikenberry are going to take to President Karzai, along with our National security team, to talk about how they can sort of empower local officials more than have a national ineffectual government?

General PETRAEUS. Well, certainly. Again, a key to this is to helping the reestablishment of viable local social organizing structures, if you will. And, as you noted, this is a very centralized form of government. President Karzai is sensitive to the challenges that that presents at lower levels. He has empowered governors in certain areas. Actually, interestingly, Helmand has one of the most active governors in all of Afghanistan. The challenge there is not one of desire, it's literally a lack of human capital, and, in particular, human capital that is willing to go into a really tough spot, like that in Marjah, when there are many requirements and demands and folks hiring human capital elsewhere, in locations that are safer. That's the challenge. And—but, it is certainly something that we have to address. It's critical. You cannot—you must complement the activities, you must build on the security foundation that our troopers and Afghan troopers fight so hard to provide.

Senator REED. Thank you very much. My time's expired.

Thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Reed.

Senator Inhofe.

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think the problem, General, all the discussion we're having right now, on the withdrawal and the timetable and all of that, is the mixed message. Frankly, I was relieved, a little bit, when the President spoke at West Point and he said it would be conditions on the ground. And I think the conditions or the perception out there is whatever you want it to be. Mine, personally—perception is that we're not going to be pulling out until we—until the conditions on the ground would justify it. But, I think the Taliban probably has the perception of "cut and run," and that's what they're talking about.

So, I just would say that I think it's important, as when—when you're communicating on the conditions there, that you talk about, "Yes, we are in it to win, and conditions on the ground," and certainly there's enough that has been said that would fortify that position.

General PETRAEUS. Well, I tried to make that clear in my statement today as—

Senator INHOFE. You did.

General PETRAEUS.—when I mentioned that our—that neither the Taliban nor our Afghan and Pakistani partners should have doubts about our continuing the fight.

Senator INHOFE. Yeah. Well, that's good. In your opening statement, you also talked about the merits of the CERP program. And I do appreciate that, because I've seen that in action, I see how it works. We actually cut that by 300 million, from 1.1 to 0.8. Was that a mistake?

General PETRAEUS. We asked for 1.1 because we believe we need 1.1. We're also aware, though, that we have, in a sense—we have not used some of those funds in the past, and we've returned them. The truth is, though, that all we do is return them to the service operation and maintenance account so that those funds are still used for very valid reasons. But, we believe that we will need that. That's why we asked for it. And we would hope to get it.

Senator INHOFE. And I agree with that.

I was real pleased to hear you mentioned, several times, your conversations you have had with Karzai. Frankly, I wasn't aware of that.

General PETRAEUS. As the CENTCOM commander, Senator.

Senator INHOFE. Yes, but you were talking about—yes, I understand that.

General PETRAEUS. In recent days.

Senator INHOFE. Well, I have to say this, though, in the years that I've been on this committee, and, previous to this, the House Armed Services Committee, when we go through confirmations, this is the first time that I've had—I've heard the Chairman say "when confirmed," not "if confirmed." So, let's just keep that in mind.

General PETRAEUS. We've had, actually, three conversations, Senator. Once right after the nomination—

Senator INHOFE. Yes, sir.

General PETRAEUS.—and then two more in recent days, including, as I mentioned, one coming over. And, by the way, he asked that I give my best to Chairman Levin and Senator McCain. But, yeah, we were talking, in fact, about the reintegration decree that he just approved this morning, which is really—

Senator INHOFE. Well—

General PETRAEUS.—quite a positive development, and now the focus shifting to the Afghan Popular Protection Program effort that his national security team is working on.

Senator INHOFE. Yeah. Well, I think that communications—that's important, because a lot of people don't realize you have that relationship. And that is very important.

There are a lot of things that have been done in Iraq that perhaps should be done. And I—I am very comfortable that you're going to go in and take advantage of that. One of them was this Task Force Observe, Detect, Identify, and Neutralize that—or its objective was to take back the roads. General Petraeus, under your leadership in Iraq, our forces were using that "take back the road" strategy, combined man and unmanned surveillance aircraft, and quick reaction teams. The results were great, at least what I have read, that they have been credited with killing 3,000 with IED emplacements, and capturing 150 high-value targets. Now, that—I assume that has not been taking place, that program, in Afghanistan. And am I correct? And is something that we—that will work there? Or is there some condition there that is different than Iraq?

General PETRAEUS. Well, there are small components of it. But, again, we just have to realize that, you know, when you only have 30,000 troops there—

Senator INHOFE. Yes.

General PETRAEUS.—which is what we had, up until a—you know, 18 months or so ago, when—now what we have is—this has become the main effort, appropriately, and we are now seeing that kind of commitment. We shifted—as the Central Command commander, and then also with the support of the Secretary and the President, we provided substantial additional intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets. And those are among some of those that you talked about, but many others. I mean, this is a

very comprehensive effort when you're trying to get the IED emplacements.

Senator INHOFE. Yes, is there anything you can think of that you could share with us that has some—has met some success in Iraq that would also apply to Afghanistan?

Senator INHOFE. Many, many things, Senator. And we have shifted substantial numbers of them over there, and others are still being established.

Senator INHOFE. Okay.

General PETRAEUS. We've done a substantial amount of infrastructure development. Of course, that's what's necessary, because you have to have platforms for all of this.

Senator INHOFE. Yes.

General PETRAEUS. And indeed, we will take the same kind of approach there that we took in Iraq.

Senator INHOFE. Well, that's good. And I think, for the record, it would be good if you could send us some of these things that—

General PETRAEUS. Be happy to—

Senator INHOFE.—have worked there that perhaps might be worthwhile—

General PETRAEUS. I'd be happy to do that.

[The information referred to follows:]

Senator INHOFE.—trying.

Quickly, here, some—and unnamed military official stated, recently, “We're on an Afghan timetable, and the Afghan timetable is not the American timetable, and that is the crux of the problem.” And then, after that, General Mills made the statement, that I'm sure you recall, was talking about, “We need to—I think we can move faster. We need to impart to our Afghan partners a sense of urgency. They have to understand there's a timeline.”

The timeline they refer to here, how do you interpret his statement?

General PETRAEUS. Well, you know, again, I've seen this movie before, as well. You know, we used to talk about the different watches or different clocks that were out there when I was in Iraq, and, you know, you'd hit the Baghdad clock to see why it was going backwards, or to get it going forward, and, in the meantime, you were aware that there were other clocks, including perhaps one up here, that was moving a bit more rapidly.

This, again, I think, is common to counterinsurgency efforts. They're tough. There's nothing easy about them. And they aren't quick.

Senator INHOFE. In 2004, our Oklahoma 45th was over there. They had the responsibility of training the ANA to train themselves. I went over there at—I guess you'd call it graduation time. I don't think they call it that.

General PETRAEUS. Right.

Senator INHOFE. But, we watched them in the field. And I'm not sure whether you were there, or—but, you certainly had people there.

When I looked at the looks in the—the faces of these guys, they were very proud that they were taking over. That sense of pride was obvious. And I was there for quite a while, because that 45th

had been training them for a period of time. I got nothing but glowing reports.

Then we get reports, like the one that has been referred to here, that was written up yesterday in the New York Times, where they talk about that the United States used the past 5 years to rate the readiness and so forth, that it wasn't working. General Caldwell had said that the American—and he was the—in charge of the training over there—said the report was inaccurate. And General Rodriguez said it was more accurate. I'm sure it's somewhere in between.

But, in terms of these guys and the expressions on their faces and the pride that they had, do you think they've lost some of that, or do you still think that they have the capability of being great warriors and taking this thing over?

General PETRAEUS. Well, they are great warriors. And—but, they're in a tougher fight.

Senator INHOFE. Yes.

General PETRAEUS. It's easy to stand tall when the enemy isn't all that significant. And we—and again, we went through this in Iraq, as well, where the Iraqi security forces not only relatively went down, they went down absolutely, because they were so threatened by the deteriorating security conditions. And that's what we have to ensure does not happen in Afghanistan.

If I could, just briefly, about the report by the SIGAR, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan—General Arnold Fields—by the way, with whom I had a very good relationship in Iraq, when he was in a capacity there—worked very hard to support in Afghanistan. I think very highly of him, and I will commit that to him, if confirmed, there, as well.

The CM rating, the capability milestone rating, I think, truthfully, more has been made of this than—all it does is tell you what the levels of manning, training, and equipping are. It didn't have the kind of subjective evaluation of fighting, which is really what you need. And it sort of tries to project that, well, they could be independent, or they can't.

And what General Rodriguez, rightly, is referring to is a new evaluation system that's been brought online as he has gotten his operational headquarters online, because he's the one who oversees the fighting. General Caldwell does the training, the equipping, and the infrastructure, and then provides those forces, or the Afghan provide the forces, to partner outside the wire, along with our forces, who are under the command of General Rodriguez. And I think, rightly, he has taken this on, and you'll get a more—this is a subjective evaluation of, Can they fight? And can they do it on their own? How much assistance do they need?—and so forth. And so, I think that's where the debate is, really. I think General Caldwell trying to point out, rightly, that, over the course of the last 7 months or so, there's been substantial progress with the establishment of the NATO Training Mission Afghanistan and the overhaul of a whole bunch of processes.

You know, the fact is that what we were doing was recruiting police and then putting them in the fight. It was basically a recruit-assign-and-then train-when-you-get- to-it model. That just can't be.

You have to recruit, train, and then assign. And the Afghan government is fully supportive of that.

And so, there have been quite a few significant changes made with the advent of the NATO Training Mission Afghanistan and General Caldwell taking command of it.

Senator INHOFE. Well, and that's a very valuable clarification. We appreciate it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator Inhofe.

Senator AKAKA.

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

I want to add my welcome to General——

General PETRAEUS. Thank you, sir.

Senator AKAKA.—Petraeus and your wife, Holly——

General PETRAEUS. Thank you.

Senator AKAKA.—to this hearing.

I would like to congratulate you on your nomination to this very critical position, and also to thank the men and women that you lead. Their commitment and dedication is appreciated and honored.

General Petraeus, I understand Secretary Gates to have said that you will have the flexibility to reconsider the campaign plan and the approach in Afghanistan. I'm sure that you will consider many issues as you assess operations in Afghanistan.

General, what are some of the key elements you will look at in the assessment? And is there anything you plan on changing immediately?

General PETRAEUS. Senator, I think the campaign plan is sound. First of all, I obviously contributed to the President's policy. I then—at Central Command, we supported General McChrystal and Ambassador Eikenberry as they developed the civil-military campaign plan to operationalize the President's policy. We think it is sound. I've been one of those, of course, who oversees that process.

Again, obviously we will look at hard at it, as any new commander does when he comes in, if confirmed, and see if there are tweaks needed in various places.

As I did mention in my opening statement, I do think we have to look at the implementation of the tactical directive and the rules of engagement. That is something that clearly our troopers, in some cases, some units, have some concerns about; and therefore, they are my concerns.

But, by and large, I think that this is more about executing, now, than it is about redesign. That's why it was important to hear that President Karzai, as I said, approved the reintegration policy. This is of enormous significance. This has been under development for months. It capitalizes on the National Consultative Peace Jirga that was held, of nearly 2,000—between 1500–2,000 participants in Kabul, several weeks ago. And it presents a real opportunity, I think. It codifies all of the processes that we have been waiting for to integrate those elements of the insurgency who are reconcilable, an important element of any counterinsurgency effort.

But, by the same token, we will continue to relentlessly pursue those who are irreconcilable. And we will seek to empower and to secure villages and valleys with local security initiatives. And this is something else that President Karzai and I discussed, literally

on the way over here again this morning. It's the next big focus that he told me about, that he and his national security advisor, in fact, discussed yesterday, so that you have a fully—a comprehensive approach. And that's what this takes—everything from the very hard-edged, targeted Special Mission Unit operations, to the reintegration of reconcilables, to conventional forces expanding their security zones, in some cases actually clearing, so that you can then hold and build. And then also local security initiatives, some of them working around our great Special Forces A Teams, who are out there, very courageously, in villages, and helping to empower and to support local elements that want to resist the Taliban, as well.

All of that, then, of course, complemented by the whole host of political, economic, even diplomatic initiatives that can help produce progress, overall, and, over time, make it enduring, as is the case—really, that was the approach that we took in Iraq, and it's the approach you have to take in any counterinsurgency effort.

Senator AKAKA. General, last week the Army announced that it had exonerated the three officers who were issued letters of reprimand related to their actions prior to the Battle of Wanat. The independent investigating officer, a Marine lieutenant general, had recommended that two officers should receive reprimands. After your review, you added a third, and concurred with the results.

General, first, I'm interested in your reaction to the Army's decision to withdraw the letters of reprimand to the three officers. And, second, would your recommendation concerning the letters of reprimand change, based on any information presented to you by General Campbell, who was the Army official charged with reviewing and taking action on the independent investigation report?

General PETRAEUS. In this case, Senator, what we did at CENTCOM—first, I directed Lieutenant General Natonski, supported by a very able U.S. Army two-star division commander, Major General Perkins, who, by the way, was the—did the Thunder Run in Baghdad—but, they did an—reinvestigation of the circumstances in this case. And your characterization of our findings is correct. We did not recommend any action. What we did is provide the results of our investigation, and then provided that to the authority that has jurisdiction, if you will—command authority, in this case, which is the U.S. Army.

General "Hondo" Campbell, a very distinguished, great soldier, in fact, who—just about to retire—has—took that on, did—reviewed the investigation exhaustively, did a further review of his own.

This is like a—you know, like any process, where there is a—there was an original finding, then we reinvestigated another finding, then, again, a final review. We discussed that. I respect his view in this particular case. I support the process. But, I did not change the finding that I affirmed after the investigating officers provided it to me. But, again, I support this particular process.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much for your responses, General.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Akaka.

Senator Chambliss.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

And again, General Petraeus, thanks to you, thanks to your family, for the great commitment that you continue to make to provide protection to America, as well as literally the whole world.

I can't help but note the number of combat stripes you've got on your sleeve, there, which is certainly an indication not only of your commitment, but of the fact that you've been gone from your family for an awful long time over the last several years. And I note, also, that those number of combat stripes are comparable to those on the sleeve of General Stan McChrystal. And I was very pleased to hear you mention him the number of times that you did in your opening statement, because he certainly has laid the groundwork, in Afghanistan, for a successful military operation.

General McChrystal has been a great military leader, he's a great man and a military officer that I had the privilege of visiting in theater several different times when he was under your command. And I know the great work that he did there. I know how recognized it is by you. And I also know the respect that he had of the men and women that served under him. And wherever life takes him now, obviously all—we all wish him the best and thank him for his service.

General, I want to make sure that you appreciate the seriousness that this issue of the deadline, as well as the issue of the rules of engagement, are. I'm not going to really get into that, because I think you've had the opportunity, and you have adequately addressed those two issues. But, if we're going to have military success in Afghanistan—and there is no other option, I know, on our minds, as well as in your mind—it's imperative that you have the tools with which you need to work. And as you review the situation on the ground leading up to July 1, 2011, I know we'll be hearing more from you on that issue.

I want to ask you about another side to the Afghan situation, and something that you and I have had a little bit of conversation about, but, your success in Iraq, particularly in the Ramadi area, when we saw a turn in the conflict there, was in large part due to the fact that the Iraqi people got engaged and decided they wanted to see a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Iraq, and joined forces with your army, as well as our colleagues and our partners in Iraq. And thus, we saw a complete change in the direction of that war.

We haven't seen that situation in Afghanistan; and unless there's confidence, on the part of the Afghan people, that we're going to be there, I don't think it's going to happen. And that's an issue that you'll address with respect to this deadline.

But, there's another part to it. In Iraq, there was an economy which could be built upon. It was founded on oil. It has been rebuilt on oil. And it appears to be moving in the right direction; the Iraqi people have a good feeling about it.

In Afghanistan, I don't see that, number one, foundation to be built upon; but, second, until there is security within Afghanistan, it's going to be very difficult for that confidence to be achieved. Two areas of their economic situation that I know are available or are potentials:

Number one, the agricultural economy of Afghanistan does have lot of potential. And you and I have talked about the fact that I

had the opportunity to observe what's going on in Lashkar Gah, with respect to what USAID and other partners are doing to build up that aspect of the economy.

Also, with the recent finding of minerals and metals in Afghanistan, there is additional potential for providing the Afghans with some sort of quality of life.

But, unless you've got security in the country, neither one of those avenues for building that economy is going to be possible.

So, I would simply like you to comment, number one, on your idea about partnering with the Afghan people and with the Afghan government to start this economy, or move it in a positive direction, and second, how that interrelates with the ability to incorporate the mindset of the Afghan people to understand why it's important that we have peace and security there.

General PETRAEUS. Well, first of all, I think there is a good partnership between the military side of the campaign and, again, the Embassy—AID Director Shah—and also proper emphasis, enormous emphasis that Ambassador Holbrooke has put on the agriculture effort, along with Secretary Tom Vilsack. And I think that has all been very positive.

Clearly, what we have to do is expand the security bubble in key areas, when it comes to agriculture, provide alternative crops to those who are growing the poppy, and so forth, to make that more viable.

And there are a lot of initiatives, everything from rebuilding the canal structures or cleaning or what have you—refurbishing the canal structures that AID, by the way, put into Afghanistan decades ago. The reason central Helmand Valley is so fertile is because it was an AID project that was hugely successful. And, by the way, they remember the Americans for that. All of that founded on security, to be sure.

Now, beyond that, I think it is worth recalling, because there were some news stories on it recently, that Afghanistan is not without natural blessings in a whole host of ways, including extraordinary mineral resources. It has extensive—some of the largest resources of all, when it comes to lithium, iron ore. It has coal. It's got tin. It has lumber. It has precious gems, and so forth.

But, of course, this all has to be—you have to extract it. You have to have extractive industries. You have to have the lines of communication. And again, you have to have security. You also have to have the governance structures in which that can function. And there has to be a legal framework that provides sufficient incentives. But, it's my hope, in fact, in all seriousness, that we could see some of what are called "adventure venture capitalists" enter Afghanistan who can help the Afghan government and people capitalize on, take advantage of, these extraordinary mineral blessings that they have.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Well, thanks very much, General. And again, thanks for your commitment.

General PETRAEUS. Thank you, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Chambliss.

Senator Ben Nelson, and then Senator Graham will follow Senator Nelson. And then we're going to take a 10-minute break.

Senator BEN NELSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, General, thank you and your wife and your family for your continuing service to our country. We appreciate it. And I know the country is in your debt for taking on this assignment.

I'd like to follow up on a couple of questions that I had 2 weeks ago about the Afghan population and whether or not they believe that the country is going in the right direction with the NATO and U.S. forces there directing it. Secretary Flournoy said, I think, that 59 percent of the Afghan people were of that opinion.

Now, much has been made about the July 11 withdrawal. Is there a way that we can—and particularly with your leadership—assure the Afghan people that this is not a cut-and-run deadline or a date—a drop-dead date for decisions? Because I think that may impact what further acceptance there is, as you've indicated, of the effort on their behalf.

General PETRAEUS. We absolutely can, Senator. In fact, I have sought to do that with my encounters, with the Afghan government as the Central Command commander, also with our Pakistani partners, with whom we've worked very hard to forge a good partnership, and who have done such impressive counterinsurgency operations, at high cost to themselves, against the Pakistani Taliban on their side of the Durand Line.

And, as you note, Secretary Flournoy did point out the results of these polls that almost paradoxically seem to show that, although levels of violence have gone up, they have actually have greater hope for the future, and greater optimism. And that's obviously something that we want to play on, and to show them that their hopes are well-founded by our actions, together with our Afghan partners.

Senator BEN NELSON. Well, there is some concern that many will, maybe, withhold their support because they're concerned about the Taliban coming back in and, as you've indicated, chop their heads off if they collaborate with us. You believe that we can, by showing our commitment, overcome some of that resistance, which is natural for people to be concerned?

General PETRAEUS. I do. And I think it would be a mistake for them to hedge their bets forever. And clearly that's what we want to demonstrate by our operations on the ground, by our development of the Afghan National Security Forces who can take over the tasks and show that, again, that is not just possible, but will happen. And also, to demonstrate to the Taliban that they should not continue what it is that they are doing, either. There are not only incentives for reintegration, there are enormous penalties for not reintegrating.

Senator BEN NELSON. The—well, with—the with—potential withdrawal of some of the NATO forces be a bump in the road, in terms of that perception, or will that be something that could simply embolden the Taliban?

General PETRAEUS. I don't—I wouldn't say that it will embolden them. It will perhaps give them a little cause for optimism. And what we have to do, obviously, is compensate. Whenever there is a shift, whenever there is an addition, a reduction, what have you, obviously, you have to redo your battlefield geometry, as it's said. And we have done that already, to compensate for the expected departure of one nation's forces. And we'll do that as we have to.

On the other hand, we're also accommodating the additional forces, for example, that are coming from Jordan—or, from Georgia, and also from some of the countries in the Central Command region, and then also some others around the world.

Senator BEN NELSON. And in that regard, as you satisfy the government that we are there to stay, and work toward building the confidence of the Afghan people, will the rules of engagement, by clearly stating them, as you have, also tell the Taliban that it's going to be "game, set, match" one of these days, in terms of their future?

General PETRAEUS. Well, I think what impresses the Taliban is not in the rules of engagement. It's the precise, targeted operations that are designed to give them no rest. The idea is, if you can get your teeth into the jugular of the enemy, you don't let go. This word "relentless" is an important word to describe the campaign against the Taliban, just as it also describes—other efforts also have to be relentless in our commitment to try to help the Afghan government provide a better future for their people.

Senator BEN NELSON. We talked, a few weeks ago, about the benchmarks and measurements—metric measurement of our success. And in that regard, what should we expect between now and December as a—just as a date and point of time?

General PETRAEUS. Well, certainly what we'll be looking at will be the security situation in districts, and, in some cases, even sub-districts, because you really do have to have a fairly granular look at this. Then, in—you can look at levels of violence within districts, for example, because that's what matters.

If you have been able, for example, to move the violence out of Marjah, and it's on the periphery, as it generally is right now—touch wood—again, that is important, because that is protecting the population. It allows commerce to resume, schools to reopen, health clinics to be rebuilt, much of which was damaged by the Taliban during its control of that particular area. So, that's important.

Then, of course, as the Chairman has focused on, rightly, How are the Afghan security forces doing in these different efforts, different locations? Not just numbers, but level of contribution, capability, quality, and so forth, as well. And then you get into the areas of the provision and the establishment of local governance, of local services, and of that whole process of pointing to a better—a brighter future for the people of that particular area.

But, again, I think you have to do it in a fairly granular fashion to try to understand what's going on, and also to confirm that the approach does produce the kind of progress that we're seeking to achieve.

Senator BEN NELSON. Is it fair to say that the—strengthening the local governments will have a positive impact on the central government of President Karzai's?

General PETRAEUS. It is, certainly, as long as that local governance is, of course, distinguished by two very important qualities. And those are: inclusivity—in other words, everyone in that area feels as if they have a seat at the table and are involved and represented; and then, transparency, so that everyone has a sense of

what's going on, and, in particular, where the money is going, because that's very important, needless to say, as well.

Senator BEN NELSON. And is that why you said, "It's hard, and it's hard all the time"?

General PETRAEUS. That, and many other reasons, Senator. Thank you.

Senator BEN NELSON. Thank you, and good luck. We're all depending on you.

General PETRAEUS. Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Nelson.

Senator Graham.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Petraeus, I can't tell you how much it means to all of us that you're willing to do this. And it is very unfortunate the General McChrystal is resigning from the Army. And, in case he's listening, I think about everyone here who's met him has nothing but great respect for his service, and the incident which led to his resignation is very unfortunate, should not be the end of his evaluation, in terms of being an Army officer. He was—

General PETRAEUS. Right.

Senator GRAHAM.—a terrific Army officer, and I want to let everyone know that most everybody who met him believes that.

Now, I don't know how this translates in Pashtun, but it's not translating well for me in English, in terms of where we're at and where we're going. And I would not use the word "relentless," General, in terms of the policy that we're embarking on, regarding the enemy. That's just my two cents' worth.

From what I can take, here's the summary of your testimony, from my point of view, and I may be wrong. It doesn't appear there are going to be any civilian changes, in terms of the team in Afghanistan. Is that correct?

General PETRAEUS. That's beyond my purview, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. Well, from what I can tell, it doesn't seem to be in—contemplated.

From your testimony, I think you've created an expectation by the American people, in July 2011 we will begin to withdraw from Afghanistan. Is that a correct assumption I've made, or not?

General PETRAEUS. What I have done is restate the policy as it currently exists, Senator. And the policy, again, that, as I stated, I supported and agreed to, back last fall, to begin a process, in July 2011, by—under which tasks are transferred to Afghan security forces and government officials, and a, quote, "responsible draw-down" of the surge forces begins, pace to be determined by conditions.

Senator GRAHAM. The Vice President has been quoted as saying, about this particular topic, "Come July, we're going to begin—leave in large numbers. You can bet on it." Is his view of the policy correct?

General PETRAEUS. Well, first of all, I've heard—

Senator GRAHAM. If that's—

General PETRAEUS.—Secretary Gates—

Senator GRAHAM.—an accurate statement—

General PETRAEUS. I've heard—

Senator GRAHAM. If that is an—

General PETRAEUS.—Secretary Gates——

Senator GRAHAM. Excuse me.

General PETRAEUS.—state that he——

Senator GRAHAM. Excuse me, sir. Let me ask my question.

Is it an—is his statement, if accurate—does that make sense, in terms of what you think the policy to be?

The Vice President of the United States has been quoted, in a book widely published in the United States, which I am sure the enemy can have access to, that, “Come July 2011, we’re going to be leaving in large numbers, you can bet on it.” Is he right?

General PETRAEUS. Well, first, let me just state something that he said that I could share with you and others.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.

General PETRAEUS. In the National Security Council meeting that followed the meeting that I had with the President in the Oval Office, at which the President laid out what the future was going to be and described his expectations, the Vice President grabbed me and said, “You should know that I am 100 percent supportive of this policy.” And I said that, “I’m reassured to hear that. Is it okay to share that with others?”

And then, beyond that, I might add that I’m hosting the Vice President for dinner tonight at our quarters in Tampa. And so, again, we have another opportunity to continue that conversation.

The third and final point is, Secretary Gates has said, I believe in testimony, that he never heard Vice President Biden say that remark, either. So, for what it’s worth.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, that—it’s worth a lot, because he’s saying one thing to one person, allegedly, and he’s saying a nothing—another thing to you, and they don’t reconcile themselves. And that is exactly my point. It depends on who you seem to be talking to, because a lot of liberal people in this country are being told, directly and indirectly, “We’re getting out, beginning July 2011. How fast, I don’t know, but we’re beginning to leave.” And somebody needs to get it straight, without doubt, what the hell we’re going to do, come July, because I think it determines whether or not someone in Afghanistan is going to stay in the fight.

Now, this is all not your problem to fix. This is a political problem. Because I’m assuming the July deadline did not come from you. You said it didn’t. You agreed to it, but somebody other than you came up with this whole July-get-out-of-Afghanistan deadline, and I think it’s all politics. But, that’s just me.

In the House, Friday, the Speaker of the House said, “I don’t know how many votes there are in the caucus, even conditions-based for the war hands down, I just don’t. We’ll see what the shape of the day—We’ll see what the shape of it is the day of the vote.”

A letter was sent to the President by Barbara Lee, a Democratic member of the caucus from the Foreign Relations Committee. It said, “Mr. President, we believe that it is imperative for you to provide Congress and the American people with a clear commitment and plan to withdraw U.S. forces from Afghanistan. This should include not only a date certain for the initiation of this withdrawal, but a date for the completion and a strategy to achieve it.”

You're advising Congress now. We fund the war. What would you say to her recommendation that war funding have a condition placed upon it that no funds can be expended until you deliver to us, the Congress, a withdrawal strategy?

General PETRAEUS. Well, what I have stated here this morning is, again, first of all, the importance of, of course—

Senator GRAHAM. Would it be wise of us to put that in legislation—

Chairman LEVIN. I wonder if he could just finish the answer.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, I think my question is pretty simple. Would it be wise for the Congress to put such a condition on war funding? Would it undermine the mission?

General PETRAEUS. Well, let's think about it from the enemy's perspective and from the perspective of our friends. And as I sought to do in this—in my opening statement this morning, they should be assured that, with respect to, one, we are going to pursue them relentlessly. And with respect, Senator, earlier, we are pursuing the enemy relentlessly. And make no mistake about it. And when you're back out there as—

Senator GRAHAM. Yes, sir.

General PETRAEUS.—“Colonel Graham,” you'll see it once again.

Senator GRAHAM. Yes, I—

General PETRAEUS. And we look forward to having you as part of the ISAF Command, if confirmed.

Senator GRAHAM. I'll look forward, but my time's up. You've got a chance to advise the Congress. Should we put a condition on war funding that would say, “You have to submit a plan for withdrawal by the beginning of next year”? Does that undercut our mission, or not?

General PETRAEUS. Well, it would be contrary to the whole policy, which has talked about conditions-based. So, again—

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you.

General PETRAEUS.—I hope that's enough of an answer.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Graham.

We're going to take a 10-minute break.

[Recess.]

Chairman LEVIN. We'll be back in order.

Senator Bayh.

Senator BAYH. Thank you very much, General.

And I want to express my appreciation for our phone call the other day. I really did appreciate your courtesy. And it's great to see you here. And again, thank you for your continued service to our country, and your family's willingness to support you in that service.

I just have three questions. It seems, you know, predictably, that most of the dialogue here this morning is focused upon the July date for next year. There are some who have argued that a deadline is important, to create a sense of urgency on the part of the Afghans and our allies, and also to ensure that we don't enable dysfunctional behavior on their part. There are others of you, you have heard here, who think that the presence of a deadline shows a lack of resolve on our part, and undermines their willingness to

do some of the tough things, over the long haul, that need to be done.

It seems to me that you're attempting to strike a commonsense middle ground here, to get the benefits of creating a sense of urgency, while still reassuring our allies that the deadline is flexible and will take into account changes on the ground.

If you could just elaborate a little bit upon the importance of trying to strike that balance, not choosing one or the other, but also the difficulties of getting it right. It seems to me, therein lies that major challenge we confront.

General PETRAEUS. Well, therein does lie the challenge, I think. Certainly there's—on the one hand, productivity experts say that there's no greater productivity tool than a deadline. And indeed, as I mentioned, the message of urgency that the deadline conveyed, keeping in mind that his 18 months or more, when it was announced, out in the future, that conveyed—and it wasn't—I'm convinced it was not just for domestic political purposes. It was for audiences in Kabul, who, again, needed to be reminded that we won't be there forever. But, we will be there, and presumably for quite some time, as we have heard—again, as I mentioned in my opening statement—various quotations from various G-20 leaders, President Obama, and others.

Senator BAYH. Can I interject just for a moment, General? It seems to me the message there to the Afghans is, "Look, we're here, and you can rely on us, but you have to do your part, too. You cannot exclusively rely upon us."

General PETRAEUS. Well, I think that's it. I think there is a sense, again, that, on the one hand, "Don't take us for granted, but do expect us to be there. But, we want to be there with you." And so, I think—and I think it did actually galvanize some degree of action. There may have been some message for some of us in uniform that we needed to get on with it.

You know, the truth is that early on in the process we were looking at a more deliberate campaign. We compressed that. We—getting the troops on the ground much more rapidly than was originally even thought possible, frankly, much less desirable.

So, I think, in that sense, again, all helpful. On the other hand, again, you have to make sure that the enemy does not interpret that as that moment where, as we've said, the United States is heading for the exits, looking for the light switch, to turn it off, because we're out of here. Because that is not accurate, at least not in my perception.

Again, I was part of the process, actually went with the President to West Point to hear the speech. I sat there, heard it. And what I took from it were two messages. Again, commitment—enormous commitment, when you think about it—I mean, so enormous, of course, that it requires substantial additional resources, as we have discussed—and the funding for that, very important—but, also the message of urgency. And that's what this July 2011 conveyed. That's how I took that.

Senator BAYH. It's always tempting to choose an all- or-nothing approach, but on something this complex, sometimes the truth lies somewhere in the middle, and it seems to me that's exactly the approach you and the President have taken. I think it's the right one.

My second question has to do—there are some who question our mission there entirely by saying, “Look, we were attacked from Afghanistan by al Qaeda, but al Qaeda is not really there anymore. They’ve moved over into the tribal areas in Pakistan.” You touched upon this in your opening statement. Can you give us your assessment about the likelihood—if we were to withdraw from Afghanistan prematurely, and the Afghans were not—did not have the capability of securing their territory—the likelihood that al Qaeda would reestablish itself in that place?

General PETRAEUS. I think there’s a high likelihood of it, especially if the pressure continues of them in—on them in the tribal areas. They have sustained significant losses, as is well known. In the tribal areas, their freedom of action has been reduced by Pakistani—or, operations by the Pakistani Army and Frontier Corps in the former Northwest Frontier Province, Paktunkwa—Khyber Paktunkwa—and in several of the agencies of the tribal areas, certainly not all of them, and certainly there are still, without question, extremist elements there that are—that have sanctuary there and are carrying out operations in—inside Afghanistan; and others that are transnational, as is the case of al Qaeda and some other elements in Pakistan, as well.

But, the Pakistanis have carried out impressive operations over the course of the last year. Their means are not unlimited, however, and they have a lot of short sticks in hornets’ nests right now, and they’ve got to consolidate some of their gains. They have to do the hold and build and transition phases, as well as they did the clearance phases in places like Swat Valley.

Senator BAYH. That is a good segue to my final question, General. As we were discussing yesterday—well, I’m confident that, with your leadership and the civilian leadership, we’re going to do our part here. Certainly there are some differences of opinion—that’s been well documented—but, we’ve got a pretty good team, and particularly our men and women who wear the uniform are going to perform heroically and do their jobs well.

But, ultimately, this is not up to us. Ultimately, it’s up to the Afghans, primarily, and then some in the area—some of the neighbors, principally the Paks, to do their job, as well.

So, my final question to you would be first about the Afghans and then about the Paks. Are the Afghans willing to reconcile themselves to being a—not a nation-state, perhaps, as we would ideally describe it, but at least to resolve enough of the ethnic tribal tensions to view themselves first as Afghanistans, and second as members of ethnic and tribal groups, sufficiently to establish a strong enough state? That’s number one. Do they have it within them to do their job?

And second, the Paks: Are they in the process of reassessing their own strategic interests, which heretofore have led them to believe that a weak Afghanistan, subject to their influence, was in their national security interest? Do they now understand that a—an Afghan government with sufficient strength to secure their own territory is, in fact, in the strategic interests of Pakistan?

General PETRAEUS. I think the answer to both of those is yes. I think it is within the capacity of the Afghan people to see themselves as Afghans, perhaps first, even before their tribal or ethnic

or sectarian identity. Certainly the country has existed as a country—arguably, it's existed as a country longer than ours has. It has had extended periods of time when it has been ruled by a leader out of Kabul.

But, as with any society like that, what it will require is, again, this inclusivity and transparency in the activities of governance. President Karzai has discussed that with me and Ambassador Holbrooke, on several occasions. And that is something that we look forward to supporting him in striving to achieve.

With respect to the Pakistanis, I think there is some reassessment that has gone on with respect to Afghanistan. I think as important has been the reassessment of the situation within their own borders.

What took place about 12 to 18 months or so ago, when the Pakistani people, the leadership, and the clerics all came to recognize that the most pressing existential threat to their country was that posed by internal extremists who had threatened the writ of governance for—again, in Swat Valley and the rest of what is now called Khyber Paktunkwa, and then in a number of areas of the tribal areas.

The fact is, I think they came to recognize that the concept that had been in practice—was in practice, and still may be in some areas—that concept, that you can allow poisonous snakes to have a nest in your backyard, as long as they only bite the neighbors' kids, inevitably turns around and ends up biting you in the backside. And I think they have come to see the challenges of this.

Now, to be fair to them, let's remember that many of these groups were formed, in the beginning, with our money, through the ISI, when we were trying to help get rid of the Soviets out of Afghanistan, and the Mujahideen were our heroes at that time. Well, those very groups put down roots and, in some cases, turned into transnational extremist elements and others—extremist elements that have threatened the idea of Pakistan being able to move forward, and actually want to turn the clock back several centuries. And I think that they have come to recognize the threat that these groups pose to their country, but have also realized that they cannot deal with all of them simultaneously, and that their means, particularly when it comes to the holding, building, and transition phases, is particularly—or, somewhat limited.

And that's why Khyber—or, that's why the Kerry- Lugar-Berman bill was so important. That's why a sustained, substantial commitment—again, we talked about the idea of a sustained commitment—that's why that is so important, with respect to Pakistan, as well.

Senator BAYH. General, thank you, again, for your service and for your leadership.

General PETRAEUS. Thank you, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Bayh.

Senator Thune.

Senator THUNE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, General, thank you for once again answering the call to duty. As you can tell, members on this committee, I think Members of Congress, irrespective of their political affiliation, have tremendous confidence in you, and—as do the American people. And our

hopes and prayers are with you and our troops to—that this can be a successful mission and undertaking. And thank you, to your wife, Holly, too, for being willing to take on the responsibilities and the sacrifice that goes with having you away all these months.

I was pleased to hear you say, I think in response to an earlier question today, you—I raised the question a week ago, when you were here, about the issue of rules of engagement, particularly with regard to close air support, and to hear you say that you are going to evaluate those. And I think it does get at this whole issue of not only protecting our men and women in uniform, but also the perception that we are in this to win. So, I appreciate you doing that.

Could you speak to the importance, with regard to close air support, of the B-1 in the current fight in Afghanistan, both in terms of providing close air support, as well as providing ISR to our troops on the ground?

General PETRAEUS. First of all, if I could, just to be precise, it's really about the implementation of the rules of engagement and the tactical directive, both of which I think are fundamentally sound. I think—I don't see any reason to change them in significant ways.

Rather, what we do need to do is make sure that the intent behind those, the intent being to reduce the loss of innocent civilian life in the course of military operations to an absolute minimum, is—that's an imperative for any counterinsurgent. We must achieve that. And I have pledged to continue to do that, to continue what—the great work that General McChrystal did in that regard.

But, at the same time, we have to find that balance between ensuring that we also bring everything to bear, if our troopers get in a tough spot, and make sure that process is very rapid in responding, when it is absolutely necessary to do that.

Now, the B-1 does play a very big role in that regard. It is a great platform in at least two respects, maybe more. One, it carries a heck of a lot of bombs, substantial ordnance. And, second, it has very good ISR capabilities—intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities. And it can loiter for a good time, when it's not being used to drop bombs, which is, frankly, what it does most of the time, because we're not dropping bombs constantly. It is up there waiting, in a CAP. Then what we do is, we use the—whatever optics that particular bomber has on it, the sniper pod or what have you. And it is almost like having another unmanned aerial vehicle, in terms of full motion video and so forth, not quite the same resolutions and differences in the capabilities, but it is very helpful in that regard, as well.

So, it's not just a case of a very, very capable bomber just boring holes in the sky, waiting to open the bomb-bay doors. It is also a case of a platform that's very capable, even as it is just doing that, flying around in circles.

Senator THUNE. Let me ask you—and I don't want to beat this to death; I think you answered it at great length—but, this was in written response to the advance questions for the committee. You state that you agree with the President's decision to begin reductions of U.S. forces in July 2011.

You also assess, in your responses to the committee's advance questions, and I quote, "An increasing percentage of insurgents are

motivated by the perception that the Taliban will eventually emerge as the dominant Pashtun political entity in Afghanistan,” end quote.

And you also write in your response to the advance questions, and again I quote, “The Taliban believe that they can outlast the coalition’s will to fight, and believe the strategy will be effective, despite short-term losses,” end quote.

Do you believe that the July 2011 date to begin reductions of U.S. forces contributes to the perception among the insurgents that Taliban will eventually emerge as the dominant Pashtun political entity in Afghanistan?

General PETRAEUS. Only if it is interpreted what I think is incorrectly. Again, if we—that—and that’s why—that really comes back to Senator Bayh’s question, earlier, I think, of being very careful in how we explain what that represents. And, of course, that’s what I sought to do in my opening statement today, as well.

This is a test of wills, though. And again, the enemy has to know that we have the will to prevail.

Senator THUNE. And I appreciate your efforts to try and clarify that. I think it is critical that the enemy knows that, that our friends, as you mentioned earlier, know that, that we are committed. I think we either have to be—you know, we can’t do this halfway. There has to be an understanding that we are in this to win.

You know that the Senate passed its version of the war supplemental before the Memorial Day break, consistent with the Department’s request. The House has yet to mark it up or to take up the legislation. And I certainly, as I think my colleagues here all do, support funding for the troops. I was compelled, as many of my colleagues here were, to vote against the emergency supplemental when it left the Senate, because the majority had included a lot of additional domestic spending on that, that many of us disagreed with. And we are now seeing that the Democrat majority, some of our colleagues in the House, are seeking to add some domestic spending items to the bill, as well.

My question is, Could you comment on the urgency of the funding, in the first place, and perhaps elaborate a little bit on what the consequences of delaying that funding would be, when it comes to our military operations, particularly those in Afghanistan?

General PETRAEUS. Well, you know, as the old saying goes, “You can never go wrong by quoting your boss.” And, in this case, I’d like to recall what I believe Secretary Gates said—perhaps you might confirm it—but, I believe that he said something along the lines that, “If the supplemental wasn’t passed by the 4th of July, then what happens is, the services have to start going into various drills,” because the consequences won’t be felt in Afghanistan. The services will find the money to fund our operations in Afghanistan. I’m convinced of that. The Secretary and the President will ensure that that is the case.

What will happen, though, is, there will have to be a whole host of other activities, that are either reduced or shut down or stopped, to find the funding for that. And I think that’s where—and that would be in other areas that the various military departments have

operations, maintenance, training, recruiting, and other readiness activities.

Senator THUNE. I assume that you would like to see a clean supplemental appropriation, though. It was talked about earlier. I think Senator Graham alluded to some discussion in the House right now about perhaps attaching some conditions on Afghanistan to a supplemental appropriation bill.

General PETRAEUS. Senator, I'll leave that up to the—all we want is the resources to enable us to continue the fight.

Senator THUNE. Well, I suspect we have a better opportunity of getting you those resources if, in fact, it is a clean bill.

There was a Taliban—there was a report, I should say, that the Taliban had attacked a wedding party in Arghandab district, a few weeks ago, killing at least 39 people. There are also report the Taliban executed a 7-year-old child in Helmand Province for cooperating with the Afghan Government. And I guess I'm curious to know, with regard to the village where the wedding party was attacked, what we've done to provide assistance to the survivors. And since this village was clearly allied with us against the Taliban, How would—why were we not able to protect it? And I guess that's—I know, as a counterinsurgency strategy, that's one of the main objectives, is to protect the population. Could you just provide—perhaps provide a little bit of insight about how that is going—

General PETRAEUS. Sure.

Senator THUNE.—and that element of our strategy?

General PETRAEUS. Well, I don't know the circumstances of what security precautions were taken for this particular wedding. Again, no question but that the Taliban bombed and killed dozens of innocent civilians in attacking what should have been a celebration, and turned it into a tragedy.

With respect to the assistance to the survivors, that one I'd like to take for the record—

[The information referred to follows:]

General PETRAEUS.—and see what it is that the unit there has done, indeed. But, I suspect, by the way, that this is what CERP is so useful for, is this kind of activity in immediate need in security circumstances that are challenging.

But, what you have highlighted is something that I think we all need to highlight much more, and something that we will strive to do in our strategic communications, and it is just merely truthfully to report the extremist activities, the indiscriminate violence, and the oppressive practices that have always been associated with the Taliban.

And despite their supposed change in strategy this year—they also have committed, they said, to not killing innocent civilians—despite all of that, they have continued to carry out actions, just like you have said. And, in fact, their IEDs kill innocent civilians in Afghanistan on a daily basis. And we must get the word out on that more effectively.

Senator THUNE. Thank you. Thank you, General. And thank you, again, for your service.

General PETRAEUS. Thank you, sir.

Senator THUNE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Thune.
Senator Webb.

Senator WEBB. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, General, I would like to reiterate what I said to you in my office, and that's how much I respect your stepping forward here, in what is really an unusual historical circumstance, in that, at least on paper, you are accepting a demotion in order to undertake these responsibilities. And, as you alluded to a little earlier, you're kind of your own boss right now. You know, there was a country song, when I was a kid, by a group called "Flatt and Scruggs," called "I'm My Own Grandpa." Your—

General PETRAEUS. There's been an amazing alacrity of approving ISAF-submitted requests in the CENTCOM headquarters—

Senator WEBB. Yes. And then the—

General PETRAEUS.—in the past several—

Senator WEBB.—the question becomes, "If you don't like what you're doing, can you fire yourself?" [Laughter.]

I would also like to express my appreciation for the comments you're making about rules of engagement here, and the need to review them. I struggled with this, as you know, as a rifle platoon and company commander in a very difficult war. I worry about it, as a father, in this war, with a son who is a lance corporal in Anbar Province. And, actually, I wrote a movie called, appropriately enough, "Rules of Engagement." It's a very delicate question in these politically-driven operations. But, you know, as clearly as I can say this, there are no circumstances—none—in which we should put our people unreasonably at risk, where they cannot take actions in order to protect themselves. And there's a perception out there, among a lot of military people, that that has occurred. And you can go a long way—I think you already have gone a long way, in terms of clarifying that to the people who are out there serving.

Last year, a little more than a year ago, when you were testifying, I raised some of my concerns about this Afghanistan venture. They were basically based on uncontrollable unknowns, particularly when it comes to the use of the military itself, unknowns that are beyond the scope of military operations, as, for instance, Can the Afghans really put together a viable national government? Can they really grow to 400,000?—which I assume is still the goal, when you combine the National Police Force with the National Army, which is probably five times as high as what any viable Afghan National Army before, on a national level, has ever reached.

And also the question on the strategy of clear, hold, and build. I recall having a discussion with you a year ago on that. We kind of know who's going to clear, and they've done a pretty good job, in terms of clearing. It was not really clear, no pun intended, who was going to hold and who was going to build.

And I would like to share with you an excerpt from a letter that I received yesterday, and get your thoughts on the phase 2 and phase 3 of this strategy. This letter was written by an individual who was a great mentor to me, as I became a Marine Corps general, and very thoughtful individual who's had family members—like so many of us have, he's had family members in Afghanistan for more than 5 years at this point. He said this, that—he said, "The national strategy, as currently implemented, is seriously

flawed,” talking about clear, hold, and build. He went on to point out that the clear phase is a military responsibility. He has great faith in it, although he did have some discussion about the difference between living among the population and operating out of FOBs, and those sorts of things. He says, “The hold phase is where the strategy’s serious problems start. The Afghan National Police are the logical force to hold a cleared area. The bulk of the population, with ample reason, considers the ANP to be a corrupt, untrustworthy, and illegitimate organization. This problem is compounded by the fact that the bulk of the population also holds the same view of the Karzai government. They consider the central government to be a corrupt, irrelevant entity. The build phase is now largely a figment of the imagination,” according to this general. “In the final analysis, the three-pronged strategy has two broken prongs. It is a charade summing to the point that the problem and its cures are essentially in the political, vice the military, realm. We have a solid military base in Afghanistan,” writes the general, “however, it is meaningless, unless the civilian leadership attacks the political problems.”

I would imagine that, in concept, you would probably at least agree with his bottom line here. And the question is, In your capacity, what do you believe can be done in order to attack these political problems and make this policy a success?

General PETRAEUS. Well, the truth is that, in counterinsurgency operations, military leaders end up getting involved in civil-military activities, as you know; you’ve lived it, you know it. And that is not just inevitable, it is essential. You must capitalize on every capability that is out there—host nation, U.S., international, whatever it may be. But, at times, you have to make up for what might not be there—again, same three categories.

But, to have a sustainable—to reach an enduring situation, such as we were able to reach, I think—touch wood—and not just in Anbar, but in Iraq, writ large, although the final chapter is certainly not written, and there’s plenty of political drama going on there now—but, over time, we were, obviously, able not only to clear areas and to turn bad guys into at least no longer bad, no longer opposing, in many cases supporting the new Iraq. Then citizens stepped forward, they were given a stake in the success of the new Iraq, they felt included, and there was a certain degree of self-policing among the community that is so important as it works forward, and then as you establish the formal security forces, and so on.

And there’s no question that the police, in an insurgent situation, facing an insurgency, are the most vulnerable. They are very susceptible to intimidation, to assassination, and, in some cases, sadly, corrupt activities, as well, or even illegal activities. And so, again, there has to be improvement in that very important element of the security forces.

With respect, I think the build phases actually are coming along reasonably well. But, again, that’s something that we are largely doing with our CERP, and then with our AID comrades, and others—U.K. DFID, and so on. But, again, the question there is to get to something that is sustainable, that’s enduring, that’s self-sustaining over the long term.

And then, there's really a fourth phase to the clear, hold, and build. There's a transition phase. And that's the phase when we begin to thin out, we begin to hand off tasks.

And, of course, you don't merely need to do this so that, ultimately, we can reduce our forces in theater. You need to do it so that you can send your forces elsewhere, so that, as we solidify a situation, say, in Nawa, you can focus a bit more in Marjah or Nadi Ali, or push out a bit farther, to increase the security bubble for the people. You don't have to go everywhere. This is not a nationwide effort, in that regard. But, you do have to be able to protect the population and the key lines of communication.

Now, I've talked, in recent days, with Ambassador Eikenberry, with Ambassador Sedwill, the NATO senior civilian representative, with Ambassador Holbrooke, General Lute, the EU rep, and various Afghan government officials, NATO Secretary General, and a whole host of others, about these kinds of issues. And there's no question that we have got to do everything that we can to enable our Afghan partners to address the kinds of challenges that you have talked about right here.

This all begins with a foundation of security, though, because you cannot expect local police to survive in a fierce insurgent situation. You can't expect local commerce to develop. You can't rebuild schools, and so forth. So, that's obvious. But, we've got to get the foundation and the security. I think that is doable, as the writer of that letter mentioned. And then, we've clearly got to address the kinds of challenges that have made the build—hold and build phases so challenging, and then enable the transition phases, as well.

Senator WEBB. Well, I thank you for that. And I wish you the best. I still have a great number of concerns about the stability of the political environment in that country. And—but, as I said to you in my office, I will do everything I can to support your effort here.

And, I—again, I—you have my upmost respect for having accepted this call, because that's basically what it is, for someone who has already done what you've done. This is a call to service, and I respect that very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you—

General PETRAEUS. A privilege to do it, Senator. Thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Webb.

Senator Wicker.

Senator WICKER. Thank you very much, General.

The compliments and best wishes, on both sides of the aisle from this committee, are heartfelt and genuine. And I hope you hear them, and I hope you understand them. I do admire you, unqualifiedly, and appreciate what you're doing.

Let me, first of all, echo what Senator Webb said about the rules of engagement. We should never have rules that put our troops in danger, at the—in the hope that we're winning hearts and minds. We ought to win hearts and minds among the Afghans, but we need to make sure that our rules of engagement protect our troops.

You said we're going to—you are going to look very hard at this issue. I would assume—and I'm not asking a question here—but,

I would assume that means we're going to look very hard at, maybe, altering or amending those rules of engagement, and applying them uniformly across the board.

General PETRAEUS. That—it's—that's—it's the latter piece of it, Senator. Again, I think—rules of engagement are pretty straightforward. And again, they don't vary enormously from place to place. Our troopers have been exercising similar rules of engagement in these various campaigns in recent years.

What we need to do is ensure that the application of them, and, as importantly, the tactical directive, which talks about the use of close air support, and other, again, enablers, as we term them—that that is uniform, and that, again, there are not leaders at certain levels that are imposing additional checks and balances at times when lives are—lives are on the line. And that's the real key.

If I could also touch on one other topic, though. It is not mutually exclusive that you can ensure the security of the population, minimize the loss of innocent civilian life, and also ensure that you bring whatever is necessary to bear when your troopers are in a tough spot. Do we take a risk in military operations? Of course we do. I mean, in any operation. The minute you go outside the gate, if you don't want to take risk, I mean, then you shouldn't be there in the first place. That's what we do. But, we have a solemn obligation, really, a moral imperative, to ensure that when our troopers and our Afghan partners are in a tough spot, that we do what is necessary to support them in those tough spots.

It's also important that they understand, again, the context in which they're operating. I mean, there are examples, for example—examples such as a house, and you're taking fire from the house. Now, our impulse is to take the fight to the enemy. That's—we close with and destroy the enemy in the infantry. That's our motto, this kind of thing. Well, in—this is not conventional combat, and if there are civilians in the house—if you don't know who's in the house, you really do need to think twice before you take out the house, if that fire on you is not pinning you down. If it—maybe you want to break contact, keep the house under observation for a while.

But, that's the kind of—what our soldiers—and they—our soldiers are magnificent; as I mentioned, they're the most combat-experienced force and the finest force our Nation has ever fielded—they can understand the intent, on the one hand, to minimize loss of innocent civilian life, and, on the other hand, to make sure that we do whatever is necessary if they get in a tight spot.

Senator WICKER. Well, thank you, General. That was not going to be my question, but it's such an important—

General PETRAEUS. It is an important topic.

Senator WICKER.—that I—

General PETRAEUS. Thank you.

Senator WICKER.—felt it was important to go ahead and let you enlarge on that.

Let me say, also, I take your testimony, about the timeliness, at face value. You said, 2 weeks ago, that, in an ideal world, timelines aren't the best, are not—

General PETRAEUS. I said, "I think you have to"—

Senator WICKER.—are not your favorite.

General PETRAEUS.—“think hard about them,” or something like that. It wasn’t quite what you said, but something like that.

Senator WICKER. But, you’ve talked about a responsible draw-down—2011 will begin a process—but, that our relationship and our partnership in Afghanistan is going to be an enduring one, and the Taliban know their enemy should not doubt our resolve. And so, I take that at face value. I want to read some excerpts from the Wall Street Journal today, by Bret Stephens, and he speaks pretty plain. Free speech is great in the United States. He says, “With a wink of its left eye, the Obama administration tells its liberal base that a year from now the U.S. will be heading for a quick Afghan exit. ‘Everyone knows there’s a firm date,’ insists White House Chief Rahm Emanuel. With a wink of its right eye, the administration tells Afghanistan, Pakistan, NATO allies, and its own military leadership that the July 2011 date is effectively meaningless. ‘The notion that a major drawdown will begin next year, absolutely has not been decided,’ says Defense Secretary Robert Gates.”

The problem with this is it appears, from what we’re learning from the Speaker of the House today, that a wink to the left may not be sufficient, and that there is a move afoot in the other body to use the power of the purse to impose timelines that the administration has not agreed to, that you would feel uncomfortable with. And it—I don’t think it’s your role, as general, to call for vetoes of legislation, but it is the role of the Secretary of Defense and the President. And I would hope that they make it clear that such restrictions on a war-funding bill by the House of Representatives would be unacceptable, and should be, and would be, vetoed, should they reach the President’s desk.

The article goes on to say, “General Petraeus won in Iraq because George W. Bush had his back, and the people in Iraq, friend and foe, knew it. By contrast, the fact that we’ve been unable to secure the small city of Marjah, much less take on the larger job of Kandahar, is because nobody, right down to the village folk, believes that Barack Obama believes in his own war.”

Let me say this. There’s no better fighting force in the history of the planet than the American fighting force in Iraq today. We are fighting an enemy that has 10- percent support among the Afghan people. There’s no way on Earth that we—that our fighting force can lose this war. The only way that our effort can be unsuccessful is that we

— if we have a government in Washington, DC, that is unworthy of that fighting force. And I want to be part of a bipartisan team that gives you the resources and the time to accomplish the mission.

Now, it—since the General took a moment to talk about rules of engagement—let me just ask you this. Could you comment—compare and contrast—the relationship you had in Iraq, between you, as the general, and General Crocker, and the approach that has been used in Afghanistan between General McChrystal and Ambassador Eikenberry? What lessons can we learn from your experience with Ambassador Crocker in Iraq? And what do you hope the civilian-military relationship will look like, now that you’re headed back to Afghanistan?

General PETRAEUS. Well, let me just reiterate, if I could, what I said in my opening statement about being committed to forging a civil-military partnership, to achieving unity of effort between the civilian and military elements, and not just between U.S. military and civilian, but between the ISAF military and the international civilian efforts, and then, of course, between those efforts and those of our Afghan partners. I think I may have mentioned that, in the past several days, without presuming confirmation, I have had conversations with—in fact, we did four-way conversations—we had Ambassador Eikenberry, Ambassador Holbrooke, and General Lute, and myself on the phone. These have been quite productive. This is, I think, the way to go about it, so that everyone is all on there. Ambassador Eikenberry is going—if confirmed, depending on how rapidly—we have various timelines—the intent is to stop in Brussels, on the way, to meet with the Secretary General of NATO, the chairman of the Military Committee, the permanent representatives of the North Atlantic Council, the military representatives, and so forth. Having talked to the Secretary General, the chairman, and then the NATO chain of command, the SACEUR, and the Commander of Joint Forces Command, Brunssum, General Ramms, who's the ISAF boss on the NATO chain. Ambassador Eikenberry will join me in Brussels. And we'll huddle there, after the activities with NATO and then fly into Kabul together. Ambassador Mark Sedwill, the NATO senior civilian representative for ISAF, will do the same.

So, again, I think that there is every intent, again—and everyone has committed to forging this civil-military partnership that can help us achieve unity of effort on the U.S. and international side, and then, as I said, unity of effort with our Afghan partners, as well.

Senator WICKER. Will you be applying lessons learned between you and Ambassador Crocker—

General PETRAEUS. Well, of course.

Senator WICKER.—in the—

General PETRAEUS. And—I mean, lessons learned from that, from study of history, of watching other circumstances, watching it in Iraq, in previous assignments there, and so forth, as well, without question—and in Bosnia and Haiti and Kuwait and a variety of other places, too; Central America, for that matter.

Senator WICKER. Wish you the very, very best. And want to be helpful in any way.

Thank you for your service.

General PETRAEUS. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Wicker.

Senator Udall.

Senator UDALL. Good afternoon, General. Thank you for being here today.

And I want to share the same sentiments that Senator Webb did with you about taking a demotion and once again responding to the call.

I want to also add my comments to the expectation, that I think we all have on the committee, that leadership, as you've demonstrated, and as Tom Ricks mentioned in a recent column, is about getting everybody on the same page. And you don't need to

respond, but I hold the President responsible, on down through the chain of command, that we'll get the kind of unified team in Afghanistan to make this strategy a successful one.

I'm reminded, moving to the second point I'd like to make, that Lincoln, I think, famously said, "The best generals always seem to work for the newspapers." I think that's what he said. And there've been a whole slew of comments in columns, over the last few weeks, from people that I respect—Ignatius, Douthat, McCaffrey, Ricks, Viscovich, Cordesman—there's a long list of smart people who've laid out a lot of different approaches to the challenge we face in Afghanistan. And I wanted to mention a couple of them in the following comments.

For those who think it is—the smart thing to do is just to leave Afghanistan, I think Douthat put it pretty well, when he said "The best exit strategy is probably success strategy. And, for those who think that a counterterrorism approach or a containment strategy would be easy, think about the long term responsibilities that those would involve."

At the other end of the scale, you have those who say we ought to have an open-ended approach in Afghanistan, that there shouldn't be any real urgency. And I disagree with that approach, as well. President Bush showed that timelines in Iraq could work. You made the point, earlier, that we've combined a sense of urgency with an enormously larger commitment of troops and support in Afghanistan.

Again, you don't have to comment, but I hold those comments out as my—as reflecting my point of view, for the citizens of Colorado and members of this committee.

Let me just move to a question you've asked—you've been asked, and answered some different ways here this morning. A lot of people think we've had success in Iraq. We can just replicate it in Afghanistan. What's different, in Afghanistan, when it comes to our counterinsurgency strategy?

General PETRAEUS. Well, they're two very different countries, obviously. It might be worth recalling that, back in September 2005, after I completed a second tour in Iraq, when we stood up the train-and-equip mission, and so forth, I was asked to come home through Afghanistan—by the Secretary of Defense—and to do an assessment of the situation over there, and particularly the train-and-equip program. And I did that. And in the course of doing that, when I reported out to him, of course with the aid of PowerPoint, which is one of the First Amendment rights of every four-star general to—in expressing—his freedom of expression—but, anyway, we laid out a PowerPoint slide, and the title of the slide was "Afghanistan"—and it had the do-not—does-not-equal sign—"Afghanistan Does Not Equal Iraq," and then laid out the factors that were different: the very different level of human capital in Afghanistan, a country that's been wracked by well over three decades of conflict, and started out, prior to that time, as one of the fifth poorest countries in the world—, the lack of infrastructure, the lack, at that time, to my awareness at that time, of the kinds of natural resource blessings, energy blessings that Iraq has; the lack of the very strong central government that Iraq had, arguably a bit too strong, under Saddam. But, again, you can just keep

going on down the list: 70 percent illiteracy in Afghanistan, probably 80-some-odd percent literacy in Iraq. And so, we laid that out.

All of this means that you have to adapt very substantially. You certainly can't take lessons learned in Iraq and just apply them in a rote manner in Afghanistan. They have to be applied with a keen understanding of the situation on the ground, village by village, valley by valley. All counterinsurgency is local, as they say. And so, I think we have to be very measured, again, in trying to transfer anything from Iraq.

Having said that, there are certainly principles of counterinsurgency, there are certainly experiences that we had there, and certainly there are capabilities and capacities that we developed there that are very much of value, when it comes to our abilities to fuse intelligence, the breakthroughs in each of the disciplines of intelligence imagery, human intelligence, signals intelligence, and so forth, and on and on. So, I think that has helped us.

We knew—we know, for example, that there are certain organizations that you need. When I talked about getting the inputs right in Afghanistan, what I meant was, trying to replicate, certainly, the organizations that we had in Iraq in Afghanistan. We didn't have the inputs right. In—when I took over as Central Command commander, having focused almost exclusively, for the previous 5 or 6 years, on Iraq, and opened the aperture further, to really look hard at Afghanistan, I was struck by how many actions we needed to take—again, to get the inputs right, in terms of the organizations, the people, the concepts, and, above all, the resources.

As I mentioned, on General McChrystal's watch—and on General McKiernan's, prior to that—there has been a substantial effort to get those inputs right. We're almost at the point where we have the additional forces on the ground that will enable the full implementation of the approach. But, again, that approach will have to be carried out with a keen and as precise an awareness of local circumstances on the ground in Afghanistan, and without some thought of, "Well, it worked this way in Baghdad. Why won't it work this way in Kabul?"

Senator UDALL. Let me mention that Admiral—I'm sorry—excuse me—Ambassador Crocker—he used to say, I believe, that "Just because you walked out of a movie, it doesn't mean you're—it's over." And, in that context, I've read some accounts that there's not much tangible planning being put in place for after July 2011, particularly on the civil-military front. Could you speak to what kind of planning is being done, and what's in place for that timeframe after July 2011?

General PETRAEUS. Well, the focus, I think, understandably, of really the last year and a half has been, first, to help the President contribute to getting the policy right, then to develop the implementation plans to operationalize that policy, in terms of a civil-military campaign plan, and then to expand it with our Afghan partners, and then to make some—in some cases, some substantial tweaks along the way, particularly with the A—Afghan National Security Force effort. That has been the focus. And now we're into the implementation of those plans.

At some point, obviously we'll start looking harder at this. But, I think right now, our effort, rightly, needs to look at what it is that we need to do between now and the end of this fighting season. We'll then—there will be an assessment at the end of this year, after which, undoubtedly, we'll make certain tweaks, refinements, perhaps some significant changes to get us to that point at which we obviously want to begin these processes that we've talked about beginning in July 2011.

Senator UDALL. Thanks, General. I see my time's expired.

I support the way forward, and I'm going to very carefully study the assessments at the end of this year and as we move forward.

Thank you for being here.

General PETRAEUS. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Udall.

Senator LeMieux.

Senator LEMIEUX. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General, thank you for being here. And again, thank you, to you and to your wife, Holly, for again answering the call of duty. We are going to miss you at MacDill in Tampa, but we know we'll get you back to Florida eventually, like we get most folks to Florida.

I also want to thank your senior team for also making the sacrifice and the commitment to go with you. And I know that that is a sacrifice. So, just very appreciative of all that you, your wife, your family, and your team has done for this country.

General PETRAEUS. I mean, if I could, I'd just thank them, as well. I mean, this—CENTCOM hasn't exactly been sitting on the beach at Florida, much as we'd like to. And a number of them have raised their right hands and volunteered to go back into the fray here, and to deploy to Afghanistan. And I do appreciate that very much.

Senator LEMIEUX. General, you said, a moment ago, in answering a question from Senator McCain, that you were not consulted on the development of the drawdown date.

General PETRAEUS. I was consulted. I think—let's be very precise, if I could—I think it was, Did I—Did we propose it?—or—it was something like that. I mean, we—there's no question that, in the final session, that this was discussed—

Senator LEMIEUX. But, it was not something that you proposed—

General PETRAEUS.—and we support it and agree to—

Senator LEMIEUX.—not something you proposed.

General PETRAEUS. That is correct.

Senator LEMIEUX. And not something, as far as you're aware, that was proposed by any of the other leadership of the military.

General PETRAEUS. Not that I'm aware of.

General PETRAEUS. Based—you're a student of military history in this country, and you're well expert in it. Do you find that the adoption of something like that, coming from the civilian side, the elected leadership of the country, without being offered by the military—do you find that to normal, based upon the history of this country?

General PETRAEUS. I'm not a student of every deliberation that's ever taken place about this kind of stuff. I have watched enough of them, though, as the executive officer to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and then, of course, in various capacities as a general

officer, to know that a whole lot of things intrude that are—and appropriately intrude—because there are many, many other interests out there than the strictly military interests and strictly military advice.

In fact, I've had good conversations with individuals, in recent days, about the role of a commander in a situation such as that of being COMISAF. And in my view, it is to understand the mission very clearly, to have dialogue with one's chain of command, and ultimately the Commander in Chief, to ensure that everyone understands it the same way—and, for what it's worth, this is a process I went through with President Bush at the beginning of the surge—to then develop the—and recommend the—what is believed to be the right approach to accomplish that mission; to assess the resources necessary to enable implementation of that approach—that strategy—that military strategy, and in this case, a civil-military strategy, frankly; to identify the levels of risk associated with different levels of resourcing; and then to have dialogue about all of that, as it goes forward, recognizing that, as you recommend that—when COMISAF made a recommendation to me, for example, as Central Command commander, I had a broader purview. You know, there—it wasn't just about—only about Afghanistan in Central Command, we also certainly still had Iraq. There's Yemen, there's Iran, there's Lebanon. There's a whole host of other challenges. It goes to the Pentagon and, of course, now it's the whole world.

You also now start to have, probably, resource implications and the opportunity costs of doing something in one place and not in another. And then, obviously and appropriately, when it goes across the river to the White House, the President has to be interested in fiscal considerations, political considerations, diplomatic considerations. All of that is appropriate.

Senator LEMIEUX. I understand. If I may—

General PETRAEUS. So, I won't find it unusual to have, again, something be inserted that was not from the bottom up.

Senator LEMIEUX. I'm just trying to think of a precedent in American history where we were fighting a war, and, before we've won that war, we've decided that there would be a day that we would start withdrawing our troops. Are you aware of such a precedent?

General PETRAEUS. Look, with—you might just go back and look, with respect, at some of the—again, the 2005–2006 timeframe in Iraq; look at the efforts at transitioning of tasks to Iraqi security forces prior to the beginning of the surge, and so forth. So, again, I'd be—I think I'd be careful, if I could, with respect, Senator.

Senator LEMIEUX. The amount of troops that General McChrystal had recommended was 40,000. And the President agreed to send 30,000 troops, with the understanding that 10,000 troops would be drawn down upon from our international partners. What's the status of those 10,000 troops?

General PETRAEUS. I think that right now, again—you always—always recalculating numbers—but, the latest number that I was given is that 9700 have been pledged. Of that, I think about 60 percent of those are actually on the ground. Beyond that, Secretary Gates has been given—and he has explained this publicly—a “flex

factor,” if you will, of some 10 percent on top of the 30 percent, so that he—

Chairman LEVIN. Thirty thousand.

General PETRAEUS.—doesn’t need to go back to the President if—

Chairman LEVIN. Top of the 30,000.

General PETRAEUS.—I’m sorry—30,000, right—so that, if required for force—emerging force protection needs and so forth, that he can very quickly make determinations and enable the deployment of those forces to protect our forces, or to deploy something that is urgently needed without having to, again, get into a deliberation.

Senator LEMIEUX. Are those international troops there without caveats? Are they able to fight, just as our U.S. troops are able to fight?

General PETRAEUS. It varies from country to country, clearly. Certainly there are countries with caveats. For what it’s worth, when I was the commander in Iraq, many of the international contributions had caveats, some of them official and, by the way, some of them non-official, or unofficial. So, in—the job of a coalition commander is to—certainly, he should ask for everything—I mean, there’s, you know, never been a coalition commander that wouldn’t like fewer caveats, more troops, more money, and now, by the way, more bandwidth, as well, because bandwidth is another key need.

But, when you get all that, after having done that, your job is to stop whining and to get on with it—

Senator LEMIEUX. Right.

General PETRAEUS.—and, you know, put it all together; understand the strengths and weaknesses, the capabilities and limitations of each element in the force, and try to make the best use of those elements that are provided.

Senator LEMIEUX. When you get on the ground in Afghanistan—this will have to be my final question, because my time is up—I assume you’re going to make an evaluation of the troops that have deployed, as well as our international partners that have troops. Is it possible that, in the next coming months, as you’re on the ground making those decisions, that you could request additional troops, beyond those that have been pledged?

General PETRAEUS. Not only is it possible, I will, if confirmed, do that at NATO when I am there, en route—we’re going to stop at NATO, en route to Kabul, and there is a requirement for forces that has not been met by NATO. This is a NATO standing requirement for additional trainers. Chairman Levin talked at considerable length about this, 2 weeks ago, as we worked our way through the numbers of what the requirement is, what has been already put on the ground, what is pledged, and then what is still out there as a requirement. And I will state to our NATO partners the importance of filling, in particular, those trainer and mentor billets, because that’s all about the development of the Afghan National Security Forces.

Senator LEMIEUX. And my question wasn’t clear enough. Is it possible that you may ask the President for additional troops, as well?

General PETRAEUS. Senator, as I've said—as I said 2 weeks ago, as I said this morning, I will offer my best professional military advice, and if that's part of it, then that's what I'll provide.

Senator LEMIEUX. Thank you again, General.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General PETRAEUS. Thank you. And thanks for the tremendous support that Florida provides to those at MacDill, and all of our Armed Forces.

Senator LEMIEUX. Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Lemieux.

Senator Hagan.

Senator HAGAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Petraeus, I am glad that the President has chosen you to be the commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan and NATO's International Security Assistance Force. There's nobody better equipped to do this job than you. You wrote the counterinsurgency field manual when you were the commanding general of the U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, and you implemented it as the commander in Iraq during the surge in troops and the change in the Iraqi strategy. You were also fundamental in helping to shape President Obama's strategy in Afghanistan. So, I want to say, to you thank you, and to Mrs. Petraeus, for your continued sacrifice and service.

And, Mrs. Petraeus, I want to personally tell you how much we all appreciate your support and personal sacrifice. And your patriotism is most obvious. And on behalf of the citizens and the soldiers and the families in North Carolina, I just want to tell you, once again, thank you very much.

And, General Petraeus, earlier today you mentioned that President Karzai is sensitive to empowering provincial and district governors in Afghanistan. It seems that President Karzai tends to favor a more centralized government in Kabul. And, as you mentioned, it's important that there is inclusivity and transparency for all in Afghan—Afghanistan. However, the Taliban shadow governments continue to pose significant problems throughout Afghanistan. How will you work with President Karzai to continue to develop local Afghan government capacity? And how will you ensure that President Karzai understands that it's in his best interest to build the local governance capacity?

General PETRAEUS. Well, first of all, Senator, thanks, to all those in the Tarheel States who do so much for our country. I'm hard-pressed to think of three greater platforms than what you have there with the Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps, and what a privilege it's been to serve at the center of the military universe—that being, of course, Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

With respect to the point about centralized government, of course, the constitution is what mandates the centralization of that government in Afghanistan, and President Karzai is, of course, carrying out the law of that constitution. But, without question, I will work very hard with Ambassador Eikenberry, with Ambassador Mark Sedwill, with Ambassador Staffan de Mistura, the special representative of the Secretary General of the U.N., who, by the way, again, had that same position in Iraq, to help President Karzai really operationalize these qualities that he has identified

as being essential to successful local governance. And, again, those are inclusivity and transparency.

And we've had long conversations about this. Ambassador Holbrooke and I, after we did the review-of-concept drill, a civil-military review-of-concept drill, a few months ago in Kabul, which involved not just the U.S. and ISAF and coalition, but also Afghan civilian, as well as military officials, sat for over 2 hours with President Karzai, and talked about this very subject. Because, again, we were giving him an outbrief from the conduct of this drill, where we identified certain areas that needed greater emphasis. Rule of law, by the way, was one of them—the judicial sector of that, in particular—and which he very much agrees with.

But, again, this discussion about, How do you ensure that all elements of a local community, subdistrict, district, province feel that they are represented adequately and fairly? That's critical.

I mean, arguably, one of the challenges in Kandahar is that that situation does not obtain. That's why he went down there twice in recent months alone to hold large shura councils. And folks will say, "Well, he stacked them with all his own players." Well, you could have fooled me, because some of them stood up, on camera, with the microphone, and criticized the government, criticized President Karzai. He did some self-criticism.

So, that's the kind of process that needs to be carried out so that the people do feel that what the "new Afghanistan," if you will, offers—what the Government of Afghanistan offers—is, indeed, a better future, a fairer one, and has brighter prospects than the future that the Taliban might be able to hold out.

The Taliban, in the past, has been able to play on grievances, some of them quite legitimate. When there has been predatory activity by local police or local—other security officials, or governance—government officials, that obviously plays into the Taliban's hand. And, clearly, the whole issue of corruption does, as well. And again, we've had conversations with President Karzai about that, as well. He recognizes the seriousness of it. But, again, that's—we have to help him there. And, indeed, there are structures and activities on both the Afghan and the international side that have been established in recent months that should be able to help with that, including our task force, to look very hard at contracts.

Senator HAGAN. Thank you.

At CENTCOM—as CENTCOM commander, you have been able to effectively develop a good working relationship with the Pakistani military leadership. How do you plan to utilize those relationships, as commander of the U.S. forces in Afghanistan?

General PETRAEUS. Well, the—that relationship is crucially important. And we worked it very, very hard, as did Admiral Mullen, and as did, by the way, General McChrystal, who made a number of visits to Islamabad to meet with General Kiyanni and with other Pakistani officials. But, the relationship between the Afghan government and the Pakistani government, between the militaries, and so forth, is critical. As I mentioned earlier, they are always going to be neighbors. They have had, at various times, differing objectives in the future. And what we need to do is to help them realize that there are mutual objectives that could help each coun-

try more, if they seek them, rather than by seeking objectives that are in conflict.

Senator HAGAN. Reportedly, Pakistan wants to have a role in the Afghan reconciliation initiatives, with senior members of the Afghan Taliban. And it's also been reported that Pakistan wants to be a channel to the Pashtuns in Afghanistan, and wants to utilize reconciliation as a mechanism to influence Afghanistan and avert Indian regional encirclement. How will you work with the Afghan government and military to manage Pakistan's strategic interests?

General PETRAEUS. Well, we can, again, certainly facilitate that dialogue; participate in the dialogue; be in—perhaps, an honest broker in that dialogue. We are friends to both. We are enormously enabling both, you know, with—we—Pakistan has—is in a tough fight. One of its fights, by the way, is to keep our lines of communication open. We provide substantial—you enable us to provide substantial amounts of coalition support funding to them, well over a billion dollars, for the course of the past—their past fiscal and calendar year. And then, another—somewhere—well up into the hundreds of billion—or, hundreds of millions in foreign military financing and other mechanisms, plus the 1.5 billion of Kerry-Lugar-Berman each—for each of the next 5 years. That's very important. And that's a symbol, again, of our sustained, substantial commitment. It shows that we do not want to do to them what we did after Charlie Wilson's war, which was, having achieved the outcome that we wanted, washed our hands of it and left. And I think it's very important. They've seen that movie before, as well. And, again, I think it's very important that they realize that we are in this with them, with both of them—and, by the way, with India, as well. India has legitimate interests in this region, without question, as do others, if you want to extend it further.

So, I think we can facilitate that. This would be a—again, a civil-military effort, very much. But, we'll use those relationships that we have developed to that end.

Senator HAGAN. Thank you. I see that my time is up. And I know you've had a long morning. And we all look forward to your confirmation.

General PETRAEUS. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Hagan.

General, as you've reiterated, setting a July 2011 date to begin reduction of our forces is a message of urgency to the Afghan government to take principal responsibility for their own security by increasing the capacity of their security forces, particularly their army.

Now, that message to the Afghan government reflects the urgency that I think we all feel. And it's also an urgency for the Afghan units that are capable of leading operations, to take that leadership, particularly in Kandahar.

Now, there's another target of this message of urgency, which is aimed at increasing the size and the capability of the Afghan forces, and the hope and belief that they need to take the lead in operations, particularly in Kandahar. And that other target, beside the Afghan government, of this message, is the Taliban itself.

The size and capability of the Afghan army, and having Afghan forces leading operations more and more, is bad news for the

Taliban. Now, I've described that as the Taliban's worst nightmare, because the—their propaganda, that they are fighting against foreign forces who want to control Afghanistan, will ring more and more hollow with the Afghan population as the Afghan army, which has support of the Afghan people, is leading the effort to defeat the insurgents. Is that something that you would generally agree with?

General PETRAEUS. I would.

Chairman LEVIN. Now, finally, General, you were asked, earlier, about the funding for the Iraq security forces. According to a Defense Department report, the Iraq Minister of Defense requested \$7.4 billion as part of the 2010 budget, but the Iraq Minister of Finance cut the request to \$4.9 billion. That's a 2-and-a-half-billion dollar cut in Iraqi support for their own military, from the request that was made by the Minister of Defense. Were you familiar with the Government of Iraq's cut to the Ministry of Defense request?

General PETRAEUS. With respect, I missed that—

Chairman LEVIN. That's all right.

General PETRAEUS.—Mr. Chairman. However, having heard it, I want to assure you that I will communicate with my friend, Minister of Finance, Bayan Jabbar, and express my concern about that, my hope that they would increase that amount, and, if they can't do it in the formal budget, to do it in a supplemental, such as they have done in the past, because, it's very important that they get full funding for their forces, just as, obviously, it is for ours.

Chairman LEVIN. And the Minister of Finance recently announced that Iraq now has a windfall of an additional \$10 billion in oil revenue, above what it had budgeted for in 2010. Are you familiar with that additional—

General PETRAEUS. That—

Chairman LEVIN.—unexpected 10 billion in oil revenues for Iraq?

General PETRAEUS. That sounds a bit high. It may be on projections, frankly. And I think that's going to fluctuate with the price of oil, obviously. And—but, the fact is that they were ahead of their projected revenues. That is something that we typically watch. Once a month or so, we see that. And so, that would enable them, indeed, to fund it more fully, clearly, than he did. And I'll express that to him.

Chairman LEVIN. General, we thank you. We admire you greatly. We wish you a successful mission, with all of your troops. And we add our thanks, to all of the people who work with you, for, as you put it, raising their right hand, as well, and those that are able to go back to Afghanistan to do so.

We will stand adjourned with, again, our gratitude to you and to Mrs. Petraeus.

[Whereupon, at 12:49 p.m., the committee adjourned.]