

HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

TUESDAY, APRIL 16, 2013

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:35 a.m. in room SR-216, Hart Senate Office Building, Senator Carl Levin (chairman) presiding.

Committee members present: Senators Levin, Reed, Nelson, Udall, Manchin, Shaheen, Blumenthal, Donnelly, Kaine, King, Inhofe, McCain, Sessions, Ayotte, Graham, Blunt, and Lee.

Committee staff members present: Peter K. Levine, staff director; and Leah C. Brewer, nominations and hearings clerk.

Majority staff members present: Joseph M. Bryan, professional staff member; Jason W. Maroney, counsel; William G.P. Monahan, counsel; and Michael J. Noblet, professional staff member.

Minority staff members present: John A. Bonsell, minority staff director; and Thomas W. Goffus, professional staff member.

Staff assistants present: Bradley S. Watson and Lauren M. Gillis.

Committee members' assistants present: Carolyn Chuhta, assistant to Senator Reed; Jeff Fatora and Susie Perez Quinn, assistants to Senator Nelson; Casey Howard, assistant to Senator Udall; Mara Boggs and David LaPorte, assistants to Senator Manchin; Chad Kreikemeier, assistant to Senator Shaheen; Marta McLellan Ross, assistant to Senator Donnelly; Karen Courington, assistant to Senator Kaine; Christian Brose, assistant to Senator McCain; T. Finch Fulton and Lenwood Landrum, assistants to Senator Sessions; Todd Harmer, assistant to Senator Chambliss; Joseph Lai, assistant to Senator Wicker; Brad Bowman, assistant to Senator Ayotte; Craig Abele, assistant to Senator Graham; Charles Prosch, assistant to Senator Blunt; and Peter Blair, assistant to Senator Lee.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CARL LEVIN, CHAIRMAN

Chairman LEVIN. Good morning, everybody. Before we begin, I want to take a moment to reflect on the tragedy in Boston. Thousands of people had gathered there yesterday accepting the physical and mental challenge of running a marathon. The city celebrated its annual Patriots Day holiday in remembrance of Boston's role in our Nation's founding.

Whoever was responsible for targeting that celebration, whatever their twisted motives, they will fail. America has demonstrated a remarkable resilience throughout its history and a firm determina-

tion to bring justice to those who target the innocent. The perpetrators of this attack will feel the full weight of that justice.

Every member of this committee and of this Congress and all of our people mourn the tragic loss of life. Our prayers go out to the victims and their families, and we hope for the swift recovery of those who are injured.

This morning, the committee hears and welcomes General Joseph—hears from and welcomes General Joseph Dunford, Commander of the International Security Assistance Force, ISAF, in Afghanistan, and Commander of U.S. Forces, Afghanistan. This is General Dunford's first appearance before this committee since taking command of U.S. and coalition forces in early February.

General, it can be difficult for us and the American people to get the full picture of how things are progressing in Afghanistan as negative stories tend to get front page coverage while good news may not get covered at all. Based on my dozen or so visits to Afghanistan, most recently in January, it strikes me that there are real signs of progress. The NATO training mission has made significant strides in building the Afghan Security Force to its target level of 352,000 personnel. Afghan forces are already responsible for security in areas where 90 percent of Afghans live, and by later this spring, they are expected to take the security lead throughout all of Afghanistan with coalition forces shifting to a supporting role.

When Senator Jack Reed and I visited Regional Command East in January, we were told that in under two years, the Afghan Security Forces had gone from conducting less than 30 percent of operations in that region totally on their own—that is, without coalition forces present—to about 80 percent now.

Now, there are other signs of progress as well. For instance, under the Taliban rule, roughly 800,000 Afghan children were in school, and girls were denied an education. Now, more than 8 million students attend Afghan schools, and more than 40 percent of them are female. In 2001, Afghanistan had 20,000 teachers, all male. Today there are 200,000 teachers, including 60,000 women. The number of schools in Afghanistan has grown from 3,400 in 2001 to more than 16,000 today. More than 18 million Afghans now have telephone access compared to about 1 million in 2002.

Earlier this year, President Obama announced plans for drawing down 34,000 of the 66,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan by February 2014. This has been interpreted as meaning that the bulk of the forthcoming troop reductions will be put off until the end of this year. For several reasons, it would be better, in my view, to stick to the “steady pace approach” that the President at one point said he contemplated for those reductions. It would drive home to Afghans and the Taliban the success of the Afghan Security Forces, whose performance our commanders tell us has exceeded expectation.

Maintaining a steady pace of reductions would also send an important message to President Karzai. The Afghan president's use of anti-coalition rhetoric, while possibly serving some domestic political purpose, shows an insensitivity to the sacrifices made by our troops and coalition forces over the last decade, and creates a chill on the idea of a long-term partnership.

It is in everyone's interest to promptly set the conditions for any post-2014 partnership with Afghanistan. NATO defense ministers have already begun consideration of the size and mission for a post-2014 force in Afghanistan. One factor that will influence that decision is the size and capacity of the Afghan Security Forces. In this regard, the recent decision by NATO defense ministers to support maintaining the Afghan Security Forces at the current 352,000 level through 2018, rather than reducing the support to a level of 230,000 as previously planned, is the right thing to do. It sends an important signal of our continued commitment to a safe and secure Afghanistan, and may make it feasible for us to have a smaller U.S. and coalition presence after 2014.

The greatest challenge to Afghanistan's security is not the Taliban, but the Pakistan base sanctuaries for militant extremists launching cross-border attacks into Afghanistan. Pakistan has said that it supports a stable and secure Afghanistan, but its actions belie its words. The U.S.- Pakistan relationship will not be normalized so long as those extremists' safe havens exist on Pakistani territory.

Another large challenge to a stable Afghanistan is the continuing shortcomings of the Afghan Government in meeting the needs of the Afghan people and its lack of a willingness to fight corruption by government officials.

General, you have already demonstrated that you are carrying on the tradition of a highly-distinguished group of U.S. commanders in Afghanistan. You are right in that tradition. You are carrying it forward brilliantly. We look forward to your helping us understand how far the Afghans and the coalition have come and what remains to be done.

Senator Inhofe.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JAMES M. INHOFE

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think I and all of the rest up here identify with your comments about the tragedy yesterday. It is very hard to believe that that happened.

And also I thank you for commenting about, because very few people do it, the successes the women who are voting and getting all things that are happening. We don't hear that often enough.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Senator INHOFE. As we discussed in my office last week, I have been to Afghanistan several times over the past decade, and I am greatly concerned that we will repeat the mistakes of Iraq and squander the enormous sacrifice of American lives and treasure by a precipitous withdrawal of forces at the end of 2014.

In Iraq, the Obama Administration's decision to abruptly withdraw U.S. troops in 2011 has resulted in the resurgence of al Qaeda, increasing sectarian violence, and growing Iranian influence. The future of Iraq looks increasingly violent.

In Afghanistan, President Obama is making the same mistake of deciding on troop levels based on arbitrary timelines and without defining the underlying objectives, strategy, and mission. This is backwards. The strategy drives the troop requirements, not the other way around.

In my office last week, General Dunford and I discussed the need to have capability to support the Afghan National Security Forces and counterterrorism efforts in all regions of Afghanistan in an area four times the size of my State of Oklahoma. When making decisions about our mission in Afghanistan, the President should listen more to his professional military commanders on the front lines and less to the political advisors in the West Wing.

General Mattis told this committee that he recommends approximately 20,000 troops remain in Afghanistan after 2014. That would be about 13,600 U.S. troops, about half that many international forces. Our commanders tell me the mission should be to continue counterterrorism efforts and to train and advise Afghan Security Forces. For those missions across the whole Afghanistan, they tell me that 8,000 to 12,000 troops is an unreasonable target. And the fact that this Administration has floated the idea of zero troops is patently irresponsible.

A force of only 10,000 will barely be able to protect itself and would likely result in ceding the city of Herat to Iranian authorities, which is a scary thought, and the city of Mazar-e-Sharif in the north to drug traffickers and war lords. On my frequent trips to Afghanistan, I have seen the progress improve professionalization of the Afghanistan National Security Forces. The increased ability of the Afghanistan forces to lead security operations gives me hope, but also makes clear that the job of training, advising, and assisting is far from complete.

The number and types of Afghan Security Forces sustained past 2014 needs to match the security conditions on the ground. To be successful, they have got to be able to maintain both the security and the confidence of the Afghan people.

I look forward to General Dunford's recommendation on the number of Afghan forces that are needed in the post-2014 environment. From my previous discussions with General Allen, General Mattis, and General Dunford, it is obvious that the right level is closer to the 352,000 than it is to the 230,000, at least through 2018.

Although I am intently focused on the post-2014 security environment, I am mindful that the 2013 and 2014 fighting seasons are critical to setting conditions for success, and I worry that inadequate funding will erode the fighting capability of our troops on the front line. The President's budget proposal last week fails to address the unprecedented resource challenges facing our military and will hurt the readiness of our military.

To preserve our foreign combat capabilities in places like Afghanistan and North Korea, the Navy is tying up carrier strike groups at the pier. The Air Force is grounding squadrons of combat aircraft, and the Army is cancelling brigade size combat training rotations. The effect of this deteriorating readiness will be felt by the fighting forces in 2014, the men and women we send into combat in Afghanistan next year. The President must set aside political posturing and get serious about working with the Congress on the lasting solution to the challenges facing our military. The troops fighting for this Nation deserve nothing less.

I thank you very much, General Dunford, for all of your activity and your service, and thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Senator Inhofe follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator Inhofe. General Dunford, welcome.

STATEMENT OF JOSEPH F. DUNFORD, COMMANDER, U.S. FORCES-AFGHANISTAN

General DUNFORD. Good morning, Chairman Levin, Ranking Member Inhofe, distinguished members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you this morning and represent the men and women of U.S. Forces-Afghanistan. Thanks to your leadership and support, they are well-trained and well-equipped. Their extraordinary courage and performance reflects that support.

U.S. Forces-Afghanistan remains focused on denying safe haven in Afghanistan to the al Qaeda terrorists who attacked our Nation on September 11, and denying the Taliban, who harbored them, the ability to overthrow the Afghan Government. We recognize that our national interests in the region are served by a secure and stable Afghanistan at peace with its neighbors.

I appear before you this morning confident in the cardinal direction of the campaign. My confidence is based on the very real progress we have made since the surge of forces that began in late 2009, and that surge allowed us to move the campaign forward. The constant pressure we have exerted on the remnants of al Qaeda in Afghanistan has disrupted their ability to plan and conduct operations against the West.

Our coalition Afghan partner operations have pushed the Taliban away from the populated areas and prevented them from meeting their campaign objectives in 2012. While they remain resilient, they are less of an existential threat to the Afghan Government than they were in 2011. Most significantly, our efforts since 2009 have provided the Afghan forces the time and space necessary to grow and assume the lead.

As the chairman mentioned, today the ANSF has recruited and fielded most of its authorized strength of 352,000. They are leading approximately 80 percent of all combat operations being conducted, and they have the lead security responsibility for territory where nearly 90 percent of the population lives. Later this spring, in line with the plan outlined at Lisbon and Chicago summits, Afghan forces will be in the lead for combat operations across the Nation.

Today's hearing truly comes at an inflection point in the Afghan campaign, and there are many reasons to be optimistic. That said, there are several significant challenges we must overcome to meet our objectives.

Up to this point, it is fair to say we are focused on growing the size of the Afghanistan National Security Forces. We are now focused on improving the quality of the ANSF. In the months ahead, we will continue to focus on a wide range of issues to include leadership development, ministerial capacity, aviation, and the systems, processes, and institutions needed to sustain a modern professional force.

In the coming months, we will also need to address very real political and psychological factors that will affect the outcome of the campaign. With regard to political factors, we are at a point in the

campaign where there is real tension between increasing aspirations of Afghan sovereignty and the reality of operations conducted in accordance with the U.N. Security Council mandate, the law of armed conflict, and the military technical agreement. Properly managing that tension is now a campaign imperative. The psychological aspect of the campaign is equally important right now. Psychology will influence the performance of the Afghan forces this summer and affect the critical elections of 2014.

We confront growing uncertainty in Afghanistan and in the region. Many Afghans have told me they no longer fear the Taliban as much as they fear what will happen after 2014. One Afghan described it as the Y2K effect. There is a growing sense that December 2014 is a cliff for the Afghan people. That dynamic must be addressed with a credible, compelling narrative of U.S. commitment. Absent confidence and the hope for a brighter future, Afghan leaders, the Afghan people, and regional actors will continue to hedge and plan for the worst case. The behavior associated with that mindset has the very real potential to undermine the campaign.

In closing, there is a great deal to be optimistic about at this point, but we are in the decisive phase of transition. The progress we have made to date provides real opportunity, but not inevitability. There will continue to be challenges that will test our will and endurance. But in the end, if we define winning as completing political and security transition while rendering al Qaeda operationally ineffective. If we define winning as setting the conditions for the Afghans to exploit the decade of opportunity that will begin in 2015, I firmly believe we can win.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you this morning. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Dunford follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, General, and we will follow the eight-minute rule this morning.

General, I made reference to the media characterization of events in Afghanistan. Recent news reports have described a number of high profile Taliban attacks that suggest a declining security situation in Afghanistan. A Taliban attack and a hostage standoff in Farah Province was said to “highlight the crumbling security situation” and the “deteriorating security situation” in that western province.

A Taliban assault on a remote outpost in eastern Afghanistan was said to be a “serious blow” to one of the Afghan army’s most elite units. The tragic death of a U.S. civilian advisor and five other Americans in an attack in southern Afghanistan was said to highlight the “escalating violence” associated with the Taliban’s attempt to regain momentum.

Could you tell us whether in your view those articles, those characterizations, taken together provide an accurate impression of the security situation in Afghanistan?

General DUNFORD. Mr. Chairman, in the aggregate, those incidents remind us that we are still at war, and there is still violence in Afghanistan. Having said that, it is important to note that 80 percent of the violence currently occurs where 20 percent of the population lives. By and large, the population in Afghanistan has

been free from violence. The Talibani enemy have been pushed away from the populated areas.

Each of those incidents that you referred to was a separate incident. In Farah, as an example, we know that the enemy at this point is relying on high profile attacks, IEDs, and assassination attempts in order to achieve their effect because they are unable to influence the population in the way that they were a short time ago.

The issue at the remote outpost that you referred to was frankly a breakdown in leadership. It had nothing to do with the capabilities of the Afghan Security Forces in the aggregate. And, in fact, what I was impressed about was that the Afghan leadership took immediate action against the leadership that were responsible for that particular incident. So what we see is increasingly Afghan Security Forces and the leadership in the Afghan Security Forces being held accountable when they fail to properly perform their duties. And in this case, that is exactly what happened.

And with regard to the tragic loss of life of our young State Department employee, that also indicates what the enemy is intent to do in order to erode our will. But in general terms, Mr. Chairman, what I would tell you is that that does not reflect the level of violence across the country at this time. The level of violence has significantly reduced over the past two years. As I mentioned, the surge had the desired effect, and, most importantly, not only has the violence been reduced in the populated areas, but that security is currently being provided by Afghan Security Forces largely and not coalition forces.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you. General, do you support maintaining the Afghan Security Forces at the higher level of 352,000 through 2018 rather than reducing those forces to 230,000?

General DUNFORD. Chairman, I do support extending the 352,000. That decision has not been made and it is conditional on Afghan negotiations related to the bilateral security agreement and our enduring presence in Afghanistan, but I would support that. It mitigates risk during the period of a transition. It mitigates risk during a period of what we project to be economic downturn. And I think it provides that demonstrated commitment that you referred to in your opening remarks.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you. General, do you support the President's decision to draw down 34,000 of the 66,000 U.S. troops from Afghanistan by February of 2014?

General DUNFORD. Mr. Chairman, I do support it. What is critical about the drawdown this year is that it allows us to stay engaged at the battalion or Kandak level with the Afghan Security Forces during their first summer in the lead. And we have the flexibility to conduct the drawdown to allow us to stay engaged with our train, advise, and assist level at the appropriate level this summer.

Chairman LEVIN. There was an article, General, in yesterday's New York Times about the threats that are faced by many Afghans that spent the last 11 years or part of the last 11 years helping us in Afghanistan with—by interpreting so that we could proceed more effectively in Afghanistan. These interpreters are supposed to

be protected by a visa program, which I remember very vividly that Senator Kennedy and many of us worked very hard to achieve.

Are you—can you personally take whatever steps you are able to take to make sure that those visas are provided as contemplated by law?

General DUNFORD. Mr. Chairman, we owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to the interpreters that have supported us over the last 11 years. It is fair to say we could not have accomplished the mission without them, so I would fully support that.

What we are doing now on the ground is ensuring that their applications make it through the process, at least through the U.S. embassy, and come back here to Washington, DC. We are personally tracking those on an individual basis in many cases to ensure that those interpreters who most deserve to come to our country can do that. But I absolutely would support that.

Chairman LEVIN. And will you take whatever steps you can with the State Department, beyond what you have already done, to tell them that it is really important to our security and to what our security demands have been that those visas be forthcoming?

General DUNFORD. I will do that, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. And we will also be writing a letter to the State Department relative to that matter.

In terms of our relations with President Karzai, did we recently work out an agreement with President Karzai in a province where he said that our special operations forces would have to leave within two weeks? Did we get that straightened out so that, in fact, we worked out an acceptable agreement, a mutual agreement?

General DUNFORD. Mr. Chairman, we did. That was the Wardak Province. In February, President Karzai had directed that all U.S. special forces be removed from the province. That was as a result of allegations that proved to be unsubstantiated.

At the time President Karzai gave us that direction, I let the President know that that would be unacceptable both from a force protection perspective and from our ability to accomplish our objectives. He afforded us the opportunity to work with the minister of defense and minister of interior and come up with a transition plan for the Wardak Province. Since that time, we have removed U.S. special forces from one district inside of that province. There are nine districts in the province. We removed special forces from one of those districts, and we replaced them with effective Afghan Security Forces.

So in honesty, Mr. Chairman, what I told President Karzai when that was over, frankly that turned out to be a model for transition. We had broad guidance from President Karzai. We were able to work with the minister of defense and minister of interior to transition. It is exactly what is happening across the rest of the country. We are in the process of transitioning from provinces, and so this particular incident worked out. From my perspective, we have an effective solution.

Chairman LEVIN. I might just note that President Karzai made a statement, and it got huge publicity. But when the resolution was achieved by you and the Afghans, it got very little publicity. And I am afraid that is too typical of what the media situation is here.

My final question is on Pakistan. You met with General Kayani, the chief of the Pakistan army staff, with—also with Afghan military leaders, I believe. It was a trilateral meeting. Can you tell us what your assessment is of Pakistan's current role as to whether they have in any way changed their behavior in terms of ending the safe havens that exist in Pakistan that have been used to attack our forces, Afghan forces?

General DUNFORD. Mr. Chairman, at this point I could only tell you that the rhetoric from Pakistan has changed. General Kayani has pledged cooperation. We have seen at the tactical level increased levels of cooperation since the fall. We did sign a trilateral, tripartite border agreement between Afghanistan and the coalition of Pakistan in November. We have conducted an exchange of officers. I have a Pakistani liaison, flag officer, in my headquarters. We have several Pakistanis in our headquarters to deconflict border issues.

We have seen increased cooperation on the grounds lines of communication as we have tried to move our equipment back and forth through Pakistan. And General Kayani has pledged that we will meet with him on a monthly basis individually, and we also will have routine meetings at the trilateral level with Afghan leadership, as well as General Kayani.

So the rhetoric and the degree of our engagement has increased, Chairman. We are still obviously concerned with the results, and I think there is still some time to see before we can make a judgment on that.

Chairman LEVIN. Would you give us an update by the end of May as to whether that rhetoric has been followed by any change in action? Could you give us that—just send us a report by the end of May?

General DUNFORD. I will do that, Chairman. And just so you know, President Karzai, and I think is significant. I proposed and he approved two weeks ago to have General Kayani and the senior leadership from Pakistan come to Kabul and attend a meeting hosted by us with the minister of defense from Afghanistan and the chief of the general staff from Afghanistan. This is a significant step forward, and I will be able to report on that in May.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Senator Inhofe.

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

As I told you in my office, General Dunford, it is hard for me to believe that it has been 10 years since we started our active training of the ANA. And the reason I am particularly sensitive to that is that this began with the Oklahoma 45th Infantry Brigade, their first duty over there, and I spent quite a bit of time there at that time. That is what kicked it off.

And then later on with the Kabul Military Training Center, that is so incredibly impressive. It is almost like you are looking at Fort Sill, and the resources they have and the fact—and who has taken that over. You know, on any given day, there might be 10,000 Afghan ANA trainees crawling through the mud and busting down doors. That facility is now, what, 20,000 acres I think.

My concern is that with the changes that we are talking about in this hearing today, is that going to negative impact this real suc-

cess? I think the chairman here talked about the great successes that we have had over there, and I agree with that. But one of the successes is in that training capability, and that particular center you have spent a lot of time there I am sure. Is that going to suffer at all with the changes that we are looking at now?

General DUNFORD. Sir, what is important, and I think you are alluding to the post-2014 presence, what is important I think when we look at post-2014 are a couple of factors. One is geography. I believe we need to be in the four corners of the country. Much of the training takes place at regional training centers, and it is important after 2014 that we continue to be at those regional training centers with an effective advise and assist effort.

The other is the level at which we advise and assist the Afghan forces. This summer as we go into the Afghan first summer in the lead, they will be advised and assisted at the selected battalion level, lieutenant colonel level, the Kandak level. As we get to the fall, we will lift off to the brigade level. And post-2014, current planning would be either at the brigade or the corps level, and that decision has not been made yet.

But in any event, we recognize that what you pointed out is critical, and that is we maintain a robust train, advise, and assist effort at the training center level. And we would expect that to be at the institutional training center level in Kabul, as well as those four corners of Afghanistan at the regional training center. So from my perspective, what is really important is as we look at our enduring presence, it would be sufficient to address that particular function that you referred to.

Senator INHOFE. Well, you know, I have heard about some of the things that—changes that perhaps we are going to make, maybe go onto a regional level. But that facility is so impressive, I just want to make sure we are going to continue it at the level it is now. And the number of people that are going through to sustain numbers that we talked about in this area so far, it is going to be necessary to do that. And I am sure that you are equally impressed with the successes we have had at that Kabul military training center.

With the elections coming up, the—when you look at—it is their constitution that causes Karzai to have to drop out, and we know there are many areas of the world where they have a constitutional prohibition that would require people to stop. Yousemeni comes to mind in Uganda. Has there been any talk at all of any kind of an effort on his behalf to be able to remain there? I understand there is not, but I just wanted to get that into this record.

General DUNFORD. Senator, there has not been any public discussion about that. In fact, in several meetings that I have attended, both one-on-one or with the ambassador, with President Karzai, with Secretary Kerry and Secretary Hagel, you know, on each occasion, President Karzai has expressed his intent to stand down in April 2014. I also attended his address to parliament, somewhat equivalent to our State of the Union, a month ago where he announced to the parliament that he also intended to step down on the 5th of April of 2014.

Senator INHOFE. I understand that. Is there any talk about who might succeed him?

General DUNFORD. Senator, there is a tremendous amount of political activity ongoing on Afghanistan right now, but it would be difficult for me to select a favorite at this point.

Senator INHOFE. You know, there is kind of a history that when rogues are on their way out, they clean up their act. Have you seen a more positive Karzai than we have seen in the past?

General DUNFORD. Senator, over the past 2 months, we have worked through very difficult issues, President Karzai and I, and we have come in each case to an effective solution. So the relationship I have had on the ground over the last two months has been cooperative.

Senator INHOFE. I understand that when this takes place, when the change takes places, that our ISR activity is going to be dramatically reduced. I would ask you, first of all, is that really necessary, or do we have the resources to sustain it, and should we do that?

General DUNFORD. Senator, my perspective is I will need a sustained ISR effort post-2014. In fact, there is not a direct relationship between the numbers of forces on the ground and the ISR effort in that we cannot reduce ISR commensurate with the forces. In fact, at the time that we reduce forces, ISR actually becomes as important or more important.

Senator INHOFE. Yeah, that was our thinking. We have talked about this in the past because, you know, they have had several things in the media that that would reduce proportionally. And you make a very good point that that actually could be better to increase the presence of ISR capability.

I think you have talked about and the chairman mentioned his—asked the question, and you answered the question about the 352 versus the 230,000. Is your—and I agree with you. Is your feeling agreed with by General Mattis and by all the other—your other counterparts?

General DUNFORD. It is, Senator, but I think collectively we also agree that our support for 352 for any additional enabling support for the Afghans and our sustainability for the Afghan Security Forces post-2014 ought to be conditional. It ought to be conditional based on Afghan behavior, and so that is part of our calculus. But we believe that our interests will be best served by extending the 352 through 2018.

Senator INHOFE. Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator Inhofe.

Senator Reed.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, General, for your service. And I want to associate myself with the chairman's remarks about the Boston Marathon. It is particularly poignant because it is not just a Boston tradition. It is a New England tradition, and so many Rhode Islanders participate. And obviously our sympathy goes out to the victims and also our respect for the first responders and everyone who helped out. And I know you have connections, too. Your father is a retired Boston police officer. So thank you for that service, too.

You talked about in your opening comments what success might look at in winning. Can you elaborate on that?

General DUNFORD. I can, Senator. For the last few years, many people have shied away from the using the word “win.” I personally have used that word since arriving in Afghanistan. My predecessor uses that word. And I frankly think that when we are talking to 18-, 19-, 20-, 21-year-old soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines, we ought to talk in those terms.

You know, from my perspective, winning is achievable, and I described it briefly in my opening remarks. First of all, the transition to Afghan Security Forces lead in affecting security transition in 2014 is an important component of winning. And I think we have a plan that is in place to do that, and I think we can see through 2014 where the Afghans can successfully assume responsibility for security after 2014, given the projection we make about the security environment post-2014.

Another critical component of our winning would be supporting the political process that would lead to inclusive, fair, and free elections in 2014. And again, I think that is very achievable. And of course, remembering why we went there in the first place, an important component of our winning is to ensure that we deny sanctuary to Al- Qaeda in Afghanistan, and we contribute to regional stability where we have national interests.

Those three components are important. There are subcomponents to include our posturing to force and setting our counterterrorism posture post-2014, continuing to sustain the Afghan Security Forces post-2014. But if we do those three things—effect security transition, affect political transition, and deny al Qaeda sanctuary—I believe at the end of 2014, as we transition missions, as we change authorities, we can look at the families and the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines that have served over the last 11 years and say we won because we provided then the Afghans the opportunity to seize the decade of opportunity that starts in 2015. And it very much at that point is up to the Afghans to seize the opportunity that we provided them.

Senator REED. Thank you, sir. Let us focus on the Afghan National Security Forces and a comment that the chairman made. Often their successes are not as visible as their lapses. And you are on the ground. The chairman and I were on the ground in January. We were impressed. Recently we have heard of commando operations in Anbar Province, which is 203rd Corps successfully operating, and Paktika Province.

It seems to me that the first measure is obviously protecting population centers, but then exerting control over the entire country. Can you give us your assessment right now of the capacity and capability, and maybe even some successes that have not been noted by the press?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I can. And like many members of the committee, I have had many visits to Afghanistan over the years. I can remember one visit in particular in 2008 in the Helmand Province. And at that time, the ratio of Afghans to coalition partners, more properly, coalition to Afghans, was we had 10 United States marines to every Afghan that was in the Helmand Province as recently as 2008.

The ratio today, of course, across the country is there are three Afghans for every member of the coalition that is serving right

now, and we have talked about the statistics, the percentage of operations they conduct, the percentage of population they secure. Most impressive is they are actually conducting independent combined arms operations at the brigade and the corps level. That is with a minimal amount of advise and assist by coalition forces.

I'll be honest with you, Senator. Even as someone who is generally a glass half full individual, I could not have foreseen that in 2008. And I think the progress that we have made since 2009 is nothing short of profound in terms of where they are on a day-to-day basis. And what is really important, I think, to note is that when we go to Milestone 2013 this summer, and we talked about the transition we are going to have inside of formations of 600 or 700 Afghans. We are going to have 16 or 17 members of the coalition in an advise and assist role. We will have thousands of Afghans providing security in each one of the provinces—each one of the 34 provinces in Afghanistan. We will have some few hundred members of the coalition providing advise and assist at that level, and then by exception, combat support, largely coastal air support, some planning, and some logistics capability.

So when we talk about what the Afghans are doing right now and when we talk about the security environment, although we formally go to transition at Milestone 2013 later this spring and summer, early summer, in fact, on the ground today we are at that point already where the Afghans have taken the lead. They are providing security for the Afghanistan people, and every day they improve a little bit.

Again, I would caveat by saying that this progress we have made from 2009 until today is largely quantity. They are out there. They are in a fight. And at the battalion level and the brigade level, they are certainly very effective. But in order to sustain those gains, we still have challenges to ensure that at the institutional level, the logistics that we have to have—planning, programming, budgeting—those kinds of tasks are still the work that remains. But all that addresses the quality of the force, the quantity of the force, and their ability to take the fight to the enemy on a day-to-day basis is real, and it is on the ground today.

Senator REED. And as the fighting season, which is critical this year, is underway already because of the weather conditions, the Afghan National Security Forces are planning very aggressive operations going forward this summer?

General DUNFORD. Senator, they have conducted the planning for operations this summer. This has been an Afghan-led process. I attended what they called the campaign synchronization conference about six or seven weeks ago. I attended as a guest with the senior leadership from the coalition. It was led by the National security advisor, minister of defense, and minister of interior. They outlined their plan—Afghan plan—for the summer of 2013. Each one of the corps commanders and brigade commanders stepped up and briefed their plan. And over the course of eight or nine hours, they integrated their planning effort for the summer of 2013. So what we are seeing right now is very much an Afghan-led, Afghan-executed security plan for the summer of 2013.

Senator REED. Just a final question. The Afghan local police have been a component. And, in fact, as we visited in January, touted

by our military commanders on the ground as a real turning point because it combines not just the military, but also a village, a local connection, a governmental capacity connection. Can you comment on the future of the ALP?

General DUNFORD. Senator, that has been a very successful program for the reasons you alluded to. Number one, the individuals in the ALP are closely vetted in conjunction with local leadership. Number two, it is part of the Afghan National Security Forces architecture the ALP work directly for district police.

In terms of clear, hold, and build, and counterinsurgency, it has proven to be the most effective hold force. And frankly, my assessment is less relevant than the assessment of the Taliban. And we know from our intelligence that the most feared organization out there right now is Afghan local police because the Taliban realizes they cannot make inroads where we have effective local police in place. And again, it is that relationship between local leadership, the local people, and the Afghan local police that has made this so effective.

And we learned a lot over the last several years about properly vetting, and we put those proper vetting procedures in place. We have learned a lot over the years about proper chain of command and ensuring that there is oversight both from a logistics and a command and control perspective. They are fully plugged into, again, the minister of interior. And, more importantly, we are implementing what we call layered security in each one of the provinces. And the ALP are inextricably linked to the overall concept of layered security in each one of the provinces.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, sir. Thank you for your service.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator Reed.

Senator McCain.

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome back, General.

And, first of all, in your written statement, you have “what winning looks like,” and you have four bullet points. One of them says, “an operationally ineffective al Qaeda deprived of its safe haven from which to plan and conduct operations outside the area.” Have you seen any change there?

General DUNFORD. Over the years I have, Senator.

Senator MCCAIN. They do not have a safe haven anymore in Pakistan?

General DUNFORD. They have a safe haven inside of Afghanistan. In some areas, we are disrupting them, but they have a sanctuary in Pakistan.

Senator MCCAIN. So have you seen any progress there, the safe haven they have in Pakistan?

General DUNFORD. The progress I have seen inside of Afghanistan first, Senator, has been that our—

Senator MCCAIN. My question is Pakistan.

General DUNFORD. They have not been able to conduct effective operations, nor plan effective operations from Pakistan, Senator.

Senator MCCAIN. They do not have a safe haven in Pakistan?

General DUNFORD. They are still physically there, Senator. They are not able to plan and conduct operations from there at this point.

Senator MCCAIN. Well, that is very interesting news. Today in a press clip it says, "Production of Opium by Afghans is Up Again." According to the Nation's top counter narcotics official, Afghanistan is already the world's largest producer of opium, and last year accounted for 75 percent of the world's opium supply. Is that of concern to you, General?

General DUNFORD. It is of concern, Senator. It is a destabilizing effect. It breeds a criminal element, and it also supports the Taliban.

Senator MCCAIN. I thought one of our objectives back in 2001 was to eliminate opium as a crop of interest, a crop that would be so very important when now apparently, according to this news report, it might provide 75 to 90 percent of the world's supply.

General DUNFORD. Senator, in that area, our success has not been satisfactory.

Senator MCCAIN. As we watch the situation unravel in Iraq because of our failure, among other things, but primarily because of our failure to leave a residual force there, we continue to hear mixed reports about the size of the force that would be left behind. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Dempsey, recently testified that a combined U.S.-NATO post-2014 force between 8,000 and 12,000 would be "a reasonable target." General Mattis, former Commander of CENTCOM as you know testified before this committee, reflecting the opinion of your predecessor was to keep 13,600 troops in Afghanistan, with several thousand additional NATO forces on top of that. What is your view, General? What is your number?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I am going to not give you a number. I am going to give you a range. My best military advice at this point is that we leave it as a range of numbers, and here are the reasons. Number one, I think we need to see now the Afghans do in their first summer in lead, and make an assessment in November 2013. The other variables that need to be considered are how effective political transition is in 2014, and then the strategic landscape within which we expect to be operating post-2014, which addresses the strength of the enemy to include the Taliban, al Qaeda, as well as the cooperation of regional actors.

Senator MCCAIN. So you have no number to tell this committee right now.

General DUNFORD. Senator, I have not provided my number to the President yet. We are still in the process of crafting our best military advice. But my strongest military advice is not to pin down a number right now because the number is—

Senator MCCAIN. Do you not understand, General, that the reason—one of the reasons why we are having so much difficulty in some areas is because the Afghans do not know what our commitment is? They saw what happened in Iraq where we had a commitment. Do you not know that they want to know sooner or later what the American commitment is post-2014? Do you not understand how critical that is to them, because that is what they all tell me?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I do. I think the most important physical manifestation of our commitment is the signing of the bilateral security agreement with a range of numbers and the level of commitment that we will provide post-2014. I have spoken to my Afghan counterparts. I do not believe a specific number is anywhere near as important as an assured commitment in the context of the BSA, and knowing that we will provide the level of advise and assist in the counterterrorism effort necessary for post-2014.

Senator MCCAIN. Well, I cannot tell you how disappointed I am in your testimony, General, because they see what happened in Iraq. They see us withdrawing every place in the world. They see what is happening in Syria. They see a lack of commitment to the United States in Libya, for example, post-Gadhafi. And they know which way the wind is blowing.

For you to tell this committee that, well, we will make that decision later on, they are making accommodation for United States departure right now. And that is one of the reasons why we are seeing a lot of the difficulties that we are seeing. I strongly urge you—strongly urge you—to do what General Mattis said, and that is to give us an estimate of what the—General Mattis was not concerned—did not voice all the concerns that you just—and caveats that you just articulated. We know that the Afghans want to know what the size of our commitment is and what the size of the army that we will support is critical for their planning in the future.

And so I strongly urge you to come up with a number to tell this committee and the American people. We have a responsibility as well. And for you to say, well, we are just going to see how things turn out, it will determine the size of the post-2014 force, I believe is a tragic and terrible mistake for which we may pay a very heavy price.

I have no further questions.

General DUNFORD. Senator, can I comment on that?

Senator MCCAIN. Sure.

General DUNFORD. Senator, to be clear, I did not say to leave it completely vague. We are today advising and assisting at the battalion level. We are going to lift off to the brigade level here this fall. The number of post-2014 is inextricably linked to the level that we believe we need to provide advise and assist post-2014—

Senator MCCAIN. You are going to have to wait until 2014 to determine that?

General DUNFORD. We do not, Senator. What I suggested was that this is the Afghan's first summer in the lead. I believe this summer will be the bell weather for Afghan performance end the 2014 and beyond.

Senator MCCAIN. General, I talked—Senator Graham and I, we talk to the Afghans all the time. They are not sure of what the United States commitment will be, and many of them are making various accommodations for a repeat of what happened in Iraq. And that is why we got a specific number from General Mattis, but we somehow cannot get that from you. It is very disappointing.

I have no more questions, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator McCain.

Senator Udall is not here.

Senator Donnelly.

Senator DONNELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General, in regards to the bilateral security agreement, how does that stand, and what are the expectations on that?

General DUNFORD. Senator, the negotiations for the bilateral security agreement are ongoing. The next meeting between the Afghans and the United States is in the month of May. I think we are down to several issues that have to be addressed inside the negotiations.

My sense is that the Afghanistan people as a whole want the bilateral security agreement, so I am optimistic that we will get it signed at some point. But there are some difficult issues that are being negotiated at this time.

Senator DONNELLY. Is there an understanding on the Afghan side that if we do not conclude a SOFA, it is very difficult to leave our men and women there?

General DUNFORD. Senator, it is absolutely clear to the Afghans that we will not leave our men and women there without appropriate status of forces agreement in the context of the BSA.

Senator DONNELLY. What kind of timing are you looking at to conclude that?

General DUNFORD. Initially, that was identified as being signed not later than November of 2013. From my perspective, as soon as we can sign it, it would be helpful. It would address what Senator McCain spoke about a minute ago and something that we are dealing with, which is an environment of uncertainty. And I believe that the commitment that would be manifest in that bilateral security agreement would be helpful in addressing uncertainty.

Senator DONNELLY. How much control does Pakistan have over the Afghan Taliban?

General DUNFORD. I do not believe the Pakistanis have control over the Afghan Taliban. I do think that the Afghan Taliban have sanctuary, particularly the Haqqani network, has sanctuary inside of Pakistan, and they get support from individuals in Pakistan. But I do not believe anybody controls them.

Senator DONNELLY. Do you think the ISI is working with them?

General DUNFORD. There have been intelligence reports that link the ISI particularly to the Haqqani network.

Senator DONNELLY. Do you—what control does the Pakistan army have over the ISI, in your opinion?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I do not know. I do not know. I think they nominally, of course, they work for General Kayani. General Kayani is a former director of the ISI. My sense is that anything the ISI does is known by General Kayani, but I cannot confirm that.

Senator DONNELLY. Where do you see the primary source for the Afghan Taliban of the financial resources they receive, the military resources they receive? Where do you see that coming from?

General DUNFORD. A percentage of it comes from the drug trade, some probably 35 or 40 percent comes from the drug trade. Some money comes from taxes, illicit taxes that they get from Afghan people, and some money comes from external support from outside the region.

Senator DONNELLY. Now, when you look at the places that they go in Pakistan, the frontier areas, do you believe Pakistan, number

one, has control over those areas, and, number two, can get control over those areas if they do not?

General DUNFORD. Senator, Pakistan does not have control over those areas right now. They have had over 15,000 killed or wounded in operations in that area over the past decade. They have had hundreds killed or wounded just in the past several weeks as they have tried to gain control of regions in the Khyber agency against the TTP, or the Pakistan Taliban. So I think that is a clear indication that they cannot control their border area, and they cannot control the Taliban that are operating freely inside of that border area.

Senator DONNELLY. What do you see as a role for the Taliban, if any, in a future Afghan Government? As we transition out, as discussions are taking place, how do you envision that future Afghan Government? Obviously there are elections coming up, but how are we looking at the transition for the Afghan Government as we move forward?

General DUNFORD. Senator, the State Department has the lead now on working on a reconciliation process and trying to bring together the Afghan Government as well as the Taliban. I do not have any insight today that would lead me to believe that the Taliban will be part of the political process in 2014.

At some point, this war will have to be resolved through political means. There will have to be some political accommodations made. But I do not have any indication to believe that that will be in the near term.

Senator DONNELLY. As we look at the Afghan citizens, and obviously there are different parts of the country that react in a different way based on where they are located. But when the different provinces and the provincial leaders are making their decisions, and the people in the towns are making their decisions, looking at post-2014, what do you think are the most important things they are looking for from the current Afghan Government, from the army, to provide them with some certainty that come the next night, the Taliban are not going to come back and cause havoc and turn their world upside down?

General DUNFORD. Senator, in addition to being secure and not having those illicit taxes collected, and not having the kind of oppression associated with the Taliban in the 1990s, one of the major concerns that young Afghans have today is jobs. Sixty percent of the population is 25 year or less, and so in addition to security and a stable environment and free from the oppression of the Taliban, they are also very, very concerned about the economy post-2014 and their ability to seek proper employment.

The good news the chairman has outlined is that we have 8 million that are in school today. The issue is that we raised expectations, and those expectations will have to be met with an economy that will support adequate jobs.

Senator DONNELLY. And as we look towards the end of 2014, is there a detailed transition plan with the State Department and with USAID for many of the projects that have been begun, many that are on the books? Where do those projects go as we look forward?

General DUNFORD. Senator, there is a very detailed transition process. We established a headquarters just to oversee transition. We are completely interlinked with the USAID and U.S. State Department as well as other international organizations. Not only do we have a broad transition plan for every task and we have knocked that list down from some thousands to a handful of tasks now that still remain to be worked out in terms of the detailed transition plan, but every project that is out there right now will have a detailed transition plan as well.

Senator DONNELLY. You mentioned before about security zones in the country, areas that are safer than others. As you look forward to the next year and then to 2014, what are the things that you are most concerned about that could go wrong?

General DUNFORD. We are going to transition the final tranche of areas over to the Afghans here this summer. That final tranche is on the eastern part of the country along the borders. That is where the most virulent strains of the insurgency are. That is where the biggest difficult—the most difficult challenges from a security perspective are. So as we deal with tranche five, that will be difficult.

My major concern is making sure that by the fall of 2013, we have created the perception in Afghanistan that supports the political process that will begin in earnest. We will have candidates announcing for elections in 2014, here this fall in 2013. We have talked about inclusive, free, and fair elections, so ensuring that we provide security in the areas of what are now some 7,000 polling stations is a primary focus that we have in conjunction with our Afghan counterparts.

Senator DONNELLY. That whole eastern region as you look forward to that, are there metrics that you look at and you go, we have accomplished this by now, we have accomplished this by now, we are at this point. Do you have like a game plan of by the end of 2013, here is where we hope to be in those provinces?

General DUNFORD. We do, Senator. We are in the process of what we call a geographical and functional gap analysis. As I alluded to earlier, we want to affect a concept known as layered security in each one of the provinces. And layered security is successful when you have everything from the Afghan local police, to the Afghan uniform police, to the border police, and the Afghanistan national army working together, coordinated by an operational coordination center and independent with advisors. And so our metrics are very much based on the performance of the Afghanistan National Security Forces and their ability, with limited support, to provide security in each of the 34 provinces in Afghanistan. But as we have been discussing, the most difficult provinces will be those in the east.

Senator DONNELLY. General, thank you for your service.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Donnelly.

Senator SESSIONS.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I, too, would like to express my sympathy for those who—losses in Boston. And if it were to turn out to be that it was a terrorist al Qaeda connected operation, I think two things are important for us to remember. One is that perfect security is not possible. The United States

is a great Nation. It is vulnerable, and we will always be vulnerable to some sort of attacks. But the offensive approach in which we go after those who are organized and dedicated to attacking us the right approach. And it does reduce the amount of attacks that can occur, in my opinion.

General Dunford, I think you are what winning looks like, and your statement is a conclusion to this effort in Afghanistan that I can support. I think it is a reasonable and legitimate definition of success.

I am concerned, along with Senator McCain's comments, that success cannot be just removing our troops. After our men and women have given so much, this Nation has sacrificed treasure, and we have lost some of our finest in this combat. To not finish strong, to not end this effort in a way that gives us maximum opportunity for this kind of success would be a deep, deep and great failure of our country.

Do you feel a commitment to those who have served, who committed themselves to this effort, and want to see a successful conclusion occur?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I feel an absolute commitment to the men and women who have sacrificed over the past 11 years and to the families of the fallen. That, frankly, is my motivation for performing my duties on a day-to-day basis.

Senator SESSIONS. And you have told us you believe successful conclusion is possible.

General DUNFORD. Senator, I absolutely believe that the things I outlined in my statement and that I referred to a minute ago in terms of what winning looks like are absolutely achievable.

Senator SESSIONS. Well, this is an important observation, and—but I am concerned, and I will follow up a little bit on what Senator McCain—the question he raised. I am looking at an April 2nd Bloomberg article. It goes on in some depth about our group of former U.S. officials who visited there, and they say that President Obama—I will quote the first sentence. “President Obama’s failure to spell out his plans in Afghanistan is adding to the risk that some Afghans will start negotiating deals with the Taliban, according to former U.S. officials who visited the country,” one of those being former Under Secretary of Defense, Michele Flournoy, who all of us know, President Obama’s appointee there.

Do you think that is a risk—that that is a risk that is occurring?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I absolutely agree that today we are dealing with uncertainty that must be addressed, and that uncertainty has to be addressed by a clear commitment from the United States. What I was attempting to do earlier was allude to the fact that it is about more than a specific number. Our commitment post-2014 and support for the Afghan Security Forces, it is support for the political process, and it is an advise and assist in the counterterrorism effort. So it is an entire package that transcends the importance of any one number.

Senator SESSIONS. All right. I respect that. This is a quote from Under Secretary—former Under Secretary of Defense Michele Flournoy: “In Afghanistan right now, there is a huge amount of anxiety about the scale and nature of U.S. commitment long term.”

Do you think there are actions that we can take to eliminate that huge amount of anxiety, and would that not help us be successful?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I absolutely believe there are things we can do, and I absolutely believe that the environment within which the Afghans will assume the lead this year, it is critical that we shape that environment with this idea of commitment.

I mentioned the bilateral security agreement a minute ago. From my perspective, signing the bilateral security agreement, of course that takes both the Afghans and the United States to agree on the modalities. But signing that will be a clear manifestation of our commitment post-2014. And I do think that continued emphasis on the resources and the commitment we provide from an advise and assist in a counterterrorism perspective post-2014 is important. It cannot be one day we make a message and then allow it to go some months before we say it again.

I think a constant drumbeat of our commitment post-2014 is necessary to overcome the uncertainty that is very real and very counterproductive inside of Afghanistan right now.

Senator SESSIONS. This article notes that there is a historical paranoia in Afghanistan, the result of the previous abandonment of Afghanistan that allowed the Taliban to take over. Do you think that is an accurate assessment, that there is a sense of uncertainty and paranoia maybe in—among the people?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I see evidence of that. You know, I mentioned the age of Afghans. Even those Afghans who were not alive in 1992 talk about the beginnings of civil war in the 1990s and a desire not to return back to those days.

Senator SESSIONS. Secretary Flournoy went on to say that spelling out U.S. intentions, including how many troops will stay, would “reduce counterproductive hedging behavior on the part of various parties in Afghanistan and in the broader region.” Do you think that is a valuable observation?

General DUNFORD. I think providing a specific range of numbers right now with a demonstrated commitment at the level that we provide support would be helpful.

Senator SESSIONS. Are you aware that one White House advisor has said no troops may remain in Afghanistan?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I read that in the newspaper.

Senator SESSIONS. Well, would that create uncertainty in Afghanistan if that were thought to be a reasonable—a potential policy of the United States?

General DUNFORD. Senator, having no forces and no presence post-2014, in my mind, would undermine our campaign success.

Senator SESSIONS. Well, in this article, I just found it to be a pretty good summary of some of the difficult choices we are wrestling with and you are having to deal with. I mean, you are not the commander in chief. Ultimately, the President Obama, the Commander in Chief, will decide how many troops are there. You will make a recommendation up through the chain, is that correct?

General DUNFORD. That is correct, Senator.

Senator SESSIONS. Well, one of the things that was troubling to me is our Commander in Chief, President Obama, has been there five years, and we have got troops on the ground in harm’s way right this minute. And this is what Mr. Michael O’Hanlon, the de-

fense analyst at Brookings, said in this article, April 2nd, one of the most consistent, I guess, observers of our operations in Afghanistan and Iraq of anybody in America. From the beginning, he has been observing, commenting, and writing about it, and this is the liberal Heritage Foundation.

He says the absence of a clear message from Obama about the continuing U.S. presence in Afghanistan may be an indication—excuse me. He is not saying this. This is what the writer said: “The absence of a clear message may be an indication that the President has not made up his mind,” said Michael O’Hanlon, defense analyst at Brookings. ‘Obviously Obama was of two minds about keeping U.S. troops in Iraq after the war ended there,’ O’Hanlon said. ‘He may have similar ambivalence in Afghanistan.’”

So if the President is ambivalent about the future—well, I will not ask you to respond to that. I would just say if the President is ambivalent about the future, what will happen in Afghanistan? I will observe I think without a doubt it makes your job more difficult and makes success more difficult. And we have got to get our act together. I think we have to have a clear message.

I appreciate your firm view that success is possible. I think that should be the goal, and the goal should not be to meet some political vision of troop levels unconnected to the reality in Afghanistan.

Thank you for your service. We appreciate it and all the men and women that serve with you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Sessions.

Senator Blumenthal.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I want to join in thanking you for your service over many, many years in the position you have now and many others, and the men and women who perform so courageously under your command. And I want to thank you particularly for your very helpful and informative testimony here today, which is encouraging in many respects, but also sobering.

And I find it sobering in two respects particularly. First of all, your reference to the continuing threat from IEDs, a problem that has bedeviled and perplexed and stymied our efforts in Afghanistan as well as Iraq over the years. And I want to ask in particular whether you view their having been any progress in the Pakistani’s action against the flow of fertilizer and other bomb-making materials from their country into Afghanistan? Apparently the casualties and deaths and from IEDs are still the biggest single source of the threat in Afghanistan to life and limb there, both to our forces and to the ANA and ANSF. So I wonder if you could comment on whether the Pakistanis have been more cooperative and helpful?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I can, and this is another area where we have seen a lot of rhetoric exchanged over the last couple of months. We are now meeting with the Pakistanis specifically on the IED threat. They also recognize the threat to IEDs inside of Pakistan, which is think has heightened their concern.

The Joint Office of IED Defeat has had some success in working with manufacturers in Pakistan to perhaps change the composition of the chemicals inside of the fertilizer that would make it less ex-

plosive, less likely to be used in improvised explosive devices. We have some increased cooperation at the border, but, Senator, I am not satisfied with the output of all those activities yet. We still see a large amount of ammonium nitrate moving back and forth from Pakistan into Afghanistan, and sadly that provides the materials for the preponderance of the IEDs that we are dealing with.

Largely, by the way, at this point, the effects of IEDs are being felt by the Afghan Security Forces even more than our forces today.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. My impression over the years from my first visit, and I have been three times and asked these questions every time I visited, is that there have been more words than action from the Pakistanis, and the continuing rhetoric, as you refer to it, over the years has produced less action than there should be.

General DUNFORD. Senator, I think it is fair to say there is less action than there should be, less action than there needs to be.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Let me then go to the second sobering part of your testimony, which refers to the attrition rates in the ANA, what you refer to as a significant challenge, quoting you. Is this problem soluble? Is the ANA going to be able to recruit and train the forces that it needs to contain and repel and conquer the Taliban?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I believe there is room to make a significant improvement in this attrition issue. You know, I mentioned earlier that we had focused on growing the quantity of force over the last several years. The vetting process that is in place today is much better than the vetting process that we had in place a couple of years ago.

The other thing that gives me room for hope is there is a direct correlation between the attrition in the Afghanistan National Security Forces and leadership. And where we have seen effective Afghan leaders, we see low levels of attrition. Even though some of the factors are beyond leadership that have to be addressed, there is a direct correlation between leadership and attrition.

The minister of defense has recently directed a study be done of all lieutenant colonels and above in the Afghan Security Forces. They have completed that study. Thirty general officers were recommended for relief from their duties. Fifty-five additional general officers we recommended for retirement, that they hit retirement age.

Minister Mohammadi, the minister of defense, decentralized decision making for personnel for captains and below, so we see some decentralization taking place to enhance accountability of leadership. These are the steps that I believe have to be taken. I mean, I am mindful of the challenges we have in the U.S. military when I came in as a platoon commander in the 1970s, and we had significant attrition in the U.S. Marine Corps at that time, and we had significant attrition in the United States Army. And a big part of that was a function of leadership, and as leaders were held accountable and held to standard, we addressed that attrition problem.

I think a similar process can take place and is taking place in the Afghan Security Forces, but it is not something that will happen overnight. This idea of leadership development is a 2-, 3-, 5-year process, but we are moving in the right direction. And the

thing that I find most encouraging is that Afghan leadership are being held accountable today by the Afghan chain of command. When they fail to perform, they are being removed from their duties. When they fail to perform, they are being dismissed. And I think that is a positive sign.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. And that effort will really depend on the credibility and confidence and the integrity of the Afghan Government, will it not, in part, to assure that kind of leadership?

General DUNFORD. Over time, effective political transition is absolutely critical to security. They are inextricably linked, Senator.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. And let me then go to the question of corruption in the Afghan Government, which affects the United States as well. I am very concerned with the contracts involving taxpayer dollars of the United States that may go to companies that, in effect, benefit our enemy. And Senator Ayotte and I have helped to spearhead efforts to improve that contracting law that will enable more effective prosecution of those kinds of corrupt contracts.

Do you have any observations about whether there have been improvements generally in corruption within the Afghan Government, and specifically relating to U.S. contracts for goods and services?

General DUNFORD. Senator, the NDAA in 2012 that allowed us to cease contracting with the enemy was extraordinarily helpful in that we had decision making authority decentralized where if you had an indication that a contractor or a subcontractor was associated with the enemy, we could immediately stop that contract.

I read the recent investigator general of Afghanistan's report making some recommendations how to take that legislation further. And conceptually, I absolutely support that. It would expand that beyond the Department of Defense so that other U.S. Government agencies can also have the same authorities that we have been given as a result of that very helpful legislation, and also to address a different level of contracts. In the past there had been over \$100,000, and this would bring it to a level below below that.

So I do think we have had some improvement in that particular area as a result of that legislation, and I think to continue to move in that same direction would be very helpful, Senator.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you. One last question, and I have a lot more questions, but my time is about to expire. The chairman asked you, I believe, about the Afghan interpreters that were the subject of a recent piece in the New York Times. I am very concerned about providing the kinds of visas that are necessary often for the survival of these interpreters. I have talked to a number of our marines coming back, and they are concerned as well with the kind of service that these interpreters and others have provided that may endanger them, in fact, very severely so, their lives.

Do you have any observations about what we can do to improve that process?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I think raising the visibility is very important, and I would put a personal face on it. One of the individuals that is waiting for a visa, one of the individuals who has applied to come back to the United States for many years, was the interpreter that was with Sergeant Dakota Meyer the day he received the congressional medal of honor. And there is an individual who was part of that fight, fully supportive of the advisors who

that day their lives were lost, or in the case of Sergeant Meyer, certainly threatened. And there are many interpreters like that who have fought alongside of us, who have supported the mission. As I mentioned before, our success could not have been possible without them.

And I think having visibility and recognition of their contribution and facilitating their coming to our country through the bureaucratic process would be very helpful.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you, General. Thank you for your service, and thank you to the men and women who are under your command.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator Blumenthal.
Senator Graham.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, General. I thank you and your staff for doing a very good job, an exceptional job, in difficult circumstances.

I would like to revisit an exchange you had with Senator McCain about the al Qaeda presence in the tribal regions. You said al Qaeda is still present on the Pakistan side of the border, but they are—how did you term it, “not as effective?” What did you say?

General DUNFORD. Senator, what I was trying to get at was I believe our operations, and of course, those are being—not being conducted by U.S. Forces-Afghanistan, but it seems to me that there are operations being conducted in Pakistan that are disrupting al Qaeda in Pakistan.

Senator GRAHAM. Would you agree that having special forces on the Afghan side of the border has been helpful?

General DUNFORD. It has been extraordinarily helpful, and we have had a disrupting effect on al Qaeda as a result of our special forces in Afghanistan.

Senator GRAHAM. How many special forces do we have in Afghanistan today?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I can give you that number. I would prefer not to give it to you here.

Senator GRAHAM. Absolutely. But it is thousands I would suggest.

General DUNFORD. That is correct, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. One of the reasons that we have contained al Qaeda is that we have other agencies in the fight, but we have a lot of intel capability in that part of the country. Is that correct?

General DUNFORD. We do, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. And we have the ability to strike in that part of the country as well. I guess my point is that when you look at a post-2014 force, it would be a very unwise move to take that infrastructure down. Do you agree with that?

General DUNFORD. I do agree with that, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. So I want my colleagues to understand the infrastructure in place that diminishes al Qaeda’s effectiveness along the tribal regions inside of Pakistan is the direct result of infrastructure that we have in Afghanistan, as well as other agencies’ capability.

When you talk about winning, what would losing look like?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I think losing would look like Afghanistan devolving, Afghanistan returning to chaos, Afghanistan being a sanctuary for al Qaeda, the people of Afghanistan once again being subjected to the oppression of the Taliban in the 1990s, an sanctuary from which security and stability in Pakistan can be threatened. All those would be components of losing.

Senator GRAHAM. And the ability of al Qaeda to regenerate would be greater under a losing scenario, is that correct?

General DUNFORD. I do not think there is any question about that, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. And if we were seen as losing in Afghanistan, it would be hard to convince the Iranians to change their behavior?

General DUNFORD. I think a credible outcome in Afghanistan certainly will influence those who would do harm.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. Now, when it comes to future hands to be played or cards to be played, the follow on force, let us say for a moment there were no troops in 2014. We decided to pull out completely like we did in Iraq. What would your evaluation of the outcome be under that scenario?

General DUNFORD. I think if we did not have a presence post-2014 and we did not provide security assistance to the Afghanistan National Security Forces post-2014, it would be a question of time before they would devolve.

Senator GRAHAM. So we would eventually lose all we have gained?

General DUNFORD. I believe that Afghanistan would be at great risk of instability if we would leave before 2014.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you think that would be true if we had 2,000 troops left?

General DUNFORD. Senator, we would not be able to accomplish both of our missions. We have two missions as you know. One is to deal with the terrorist threat, the other is to deal with security and stability, and to prevent the Taliban from coming back. It would be difficult to accomplish those missions at a force level of 2,000.

Senator GRAHAM. And one of the goals of this bilateral security agreement is to solidify the relationship between the United States and Afghanistan for at least a 10-year period. Is that correct?

General DUNFORD. That is correct, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. People are evaluating what bets to make as I speak in Afghanistan and the region. And the sooner that we can make this announcement in a bold way, the better off. Do you agree with that?

General DUNFORD. I do agree with that, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Now, Senator Levin and I have been on the same sheet of music for a very long time about the size of the Afghan army. It is 352,000. As I understand, it costs us about \$6 and a half billion a year to maintain that force. Does that sound about right?

General DUNFORD. It is going to be \$4.1 billion for the program of record. Increasing the program of record and sustaining past 352,000 is somewhere between \$5 and \$6 billion. So that is the aggregate cost of the force. Only a small part of that is what is the cost of the program of record to 352,000 through 2018.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. So what percentage do we pay?

General DUNFORD. We pay—of the \$4.1 billion program of record, our coalition partners pay \$1.3 billion, the Afghans have pledged \$500 million, and we pay the difference.

Senator GRAHAM. The difference between 352,000 and, say, 230 is how much?

General DUNFORD. In any given year, it is somewhere between \$400 and \$600 million a year, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. The difference in capability, would you say, is significant between 352 and 230?

General DUNFORD. I think both from a capability and a psychology perspective, it would be significant.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you believe it would be a wide investment for the American taxpayer to continue to invest in the Afghan National Security Forces at 352?

General DUNFORD. I do, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. The more they have, they less they need us, is that correct? The more capable they are?

General DUNFORD. I absolutely think there is a relationship between our post-2014 presence and the capabilities and capacities of the Afghans.

Senator GRAHAM. Now, when it comes to detention, we have just entered into a new agreement with the Afghan Government. Could you give us maybe a one-minute overview of that agreement?

General DUNFORD. Senator, we transferred authority for detention operations to the Afghans in March 2013. What that means is that now there will be a criminal process that affects detainees. We have an agreement to keep the enduring security threats that are in detention at this particular time, and future enduring security threats, and we also are partnered at the facility, the detention facility at Parwan to ensure that we continue to have humane treatment, and that we have visibility of detainees post the transfer.

Senator GRAHAM. Is it fair to say that we do not have a disposition planned for the third country nationals we hold at Parwan?

General DUNFORD. We still have custody and control of third country nationals, Senator, and I do not know what the plan is right now post-2014. It is part of a process that is ongoing.

Senator GRAHAM. And some of these are definitely transnational terrorism—terrorists who have been in the fight for quite a while.

General DUNFORD. They are, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Drones. Have drones helped the operations in Afghanistan?

General DUNFORD. Significantly, Senator. That is one of the ways that we pressure on al Qaeda, as an example, but they are effective across all of our operations.

Senator GRAHAM. Under the rule of war, if you see an al Qaeda operative out in the open walking down the road and we get a good signature on this person, do we have to wait until they take up arms to fire, or can we shoot when we see them?

General DUNFORD. If they are designated, we do not have to wait until they take up arms, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Which makes common sense. Do you agree with that?

General DUNFORD. I do, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Now, as to the future of Afghanistan, you have Pakistan as a potential threat because of the safe havens. You have al Qaeda, the Taliban, and you have Afghan governance. The Government of Afghanistan in many ways is one of the enemies we are fighting here.

You indicated that the military will get better over time as leadership evolves and people are held more accountable. Do you believe that the corruption we see today in Afghanistan among different ministries and throughout the country can get better over time as these young people we have been mentoring take over in the future?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I believe it can better, but the operative part of your phrase is "over time."

Senator GRAHAM. And we are talking about a 10- or 15- year window in that regard.

General DUNFORD. We are talking a significant period of time. I think we are talking about this population now that is 25 years or less assuming positions of increased responsibility in the future.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you believe it is a good investment on our part to stay partnered with these young people?

General DUNFORD. I think it is a critical investment, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Graham.

Senator King.

Senator KING. General, thank you very much. It seems to me that what we are facing in Afghanistan and particularly what the Afghanistan Government faces after 2014 amounts to a guerilla war. And the doctrine of guerilla war, as I remember Mao Tse-Tung was that the guerilla has to swim in the sea of the people or something to that effect.

How do the people of Afghanistan feel about this conflict? Can the Taliban and al Qaeda find a warm, hospitable sea to swim in, or are the people loyal to the government and what we have tried to accomplish?

General DUNFORD. Senator, there is no question in my mind that the Afghan people do not want to return to the oppression of the Taliban that was there in the 1990s. And we have survey after survey that indicates that the Taliban are increasingly unpopular amongst the Afghan people. That has not yet made a direct correlation to support for the Afghan Government. So while they are absolutely opposed to the Taliban returning to power, they are absolutely opposed to what the Taliban stands for, they do not yet have the full confidence in the government of Afghanistan to provide it full support.

Senator KING. That might apply here. The people of America are not too crazy about Congress either. It is a different subject.

You were involved in Iraq, is that correct?

General DUNFORD. That is correct, Senator.

Senator KING. And what lessons do you take from Iraq, and particularly from the unwinding of our involvement in Iraq, that can be applied to this circumstance that we are now facing, ending our involvement in Afghanistan?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I think one of the most important lessons from Iraq that we waited too late to work through the de-

tails of a bilateral security agreement. In any event, we were unable to conclude the successful bilateral security agreement.

We have started that process much earlier. That is why I have highlighted the bilateral security agreement this morning. I think we have had a discussion about it. I think the key lesson learned is to ensure that we have a smooth transition post-2014, that we provide the Afghan people with our sense of commitment post-2014. We should view 2014 today, December 2014, as nothing more than a change in the mandate, in a change in the authorities, but a continuity of commitment post-2014. And if we are able to do that, I think we will have internalized the most important lesson from our Iraq experience.

Senator KING. So you think that essentially 2014 is—should be a seamless transition to a competent and sufficient Afghan force to essentially take over what we have been doing.

General DUNFORD. I do, Senator. What January of 2015 ought to look like is we have completed political transition. We have completed security transition. But we are still there decisively in an advise and assist in a counterterrorism role under different authorities and now now at the exact request of the Afghan people in the context of a bilateral security agreement.

What will be different is we will not be under a U.N. mandate. We will not be under the law of armed conflict. We will not be under the military technical agreement. But we will still be there and be able to provide the requisite support both politically and from a security perspective.

Senator KING. And you mentioned that the Afghan force is anticipated to be somewhere around 350,000. What are the estimates of the size of the Taliban or al Qaeda or the sort of aggregate enemy group, if you will?

General DUNFORD. Senator, that is a question that frankly we ask all the time, and we do not know. There is some estimates that talk about 20 to 30,000 Taliban. But I think because you have such various levels of Taliban, those that are actually ideologically committed, you know, Taliban senior leadership in Quetta is certainly different than day-to-day people who might fight on the ground that it is very difficult to capture a number when you talk about the Taliban.

Senator KING. I would suggest, therefore, given the small number, that the view of the people at large, as we discussed at the beginning, is going to be critical as to whether or not they can really gain any power in the situation. They are going to have to have the support of the public, would you not agree?

General DUNFORD. Senator, what gives me optimism and the reason why I am optimistic about the campaign is it is all about the Afghan Security Forces' ability to provide security to the population, and every day we are improving in that particular area. That reduces the freedom of movement. That reduces the ability for the Taliban to influence the population.

And I honestly believe—there used to be an expression that the Taliban have the time and we have the watches. I do not believe that is any longer the case. I think the Taliban are going to wake up at some point and they are going to realize this is not their father's Afghanistan National Security Forces, and they are going to

be unable to influence the population in the way that they have done in the past.

Senator KING. Let me change the subject for a minute. What is the situation on green on blue attacks? Has that declined? Do you feel that is under control? Does that indicate significant infiltration of the Afghan Security Forces?

General DUNFORD. Senator, that is one of the most insidious risks to the force, and, as you know, in 2012, we had a significant challenge with insider attacks. As a result, we significantly improved our training. We added counterintelligence capability both in the coalition as well as inside the Afghan forces. We revised our tactics, techniques, and procedures, and we have a much more routine and effective dialogue with our Afghan partners to mitigate the risk of the insider attacks.

I will not for a second be complacent. Indications are that we have made some progress just based on numbers. We have had three in 2013 during that same period of time. We had 20 last year in 2012. But of the issues that keep me awake at night and the ones that I want to stay focused on, the insider threat is absolutely one of those.

It erodes trust between our coalition and our Afghan partners, and, more importantly, it erodes the will of the American people. And I recognize that.

Senator KING. What is your analysis of the leadership of the force—of the Afghan force? That is important. The quality and character of the leadership is a crucial element to any enterprise success. And you know these people, I presume, personally. Do you have confidence that these are strong and effective leaders?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I would characterize the Afghan leadership as improving. There are a number of leaders, and we are fortunate right now that both the minister of defense and minister of interior have fallen into this category. There are a number of leaders who have vision, that have commitment, that have strong leadership, and are taking appropriate action.

It is going to take time before we have the depth of leadership that we need to have across the forces, the consistency, the continuity of leadership. Where we see good leadership we see good units. Where we see deficient leadership, we have some challenges. And that is one of our areas, again, as we focus on quality over the the next couple of years, leadership development is really important, not only officers, but noncommissioned officers.

As an example, we are currently short 10,000 noncommissioned officers in the Army and about 6,000 in the police. And addressing that deficiency and developing those leaders is a key part of what we need to do over the next couple of years to make sure that our progress is sustained.

Senator KING. Are we going to maintain after 2014 any role at all in training—in leadership and that kind of sort of professional development, if you will?

General DUNFORD. Absolutely, Senator. That really is probably the primary focus of our post-2014 contribution will be advising and assisting in the institutions where we grow noncommissioned officers, where we grow officers, where we develop integrated combined arms capability. That will be among the more important

tasks we have post-2014 is leadership development. And that is the same for our coalition partners who will also contribute.

Senator KING. General, thank you very much for your service, and particularly for your service in this very difficult and important period.

General DUNFORD. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator King.

Senator Lee.

Senator LEE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, General, for joining us and for the service you provide to our country.

If the United States and Afghanistan reach an agreement to keep troop presence, a U.S. troop presence in that country beyond 2014, what are some of the tangible goals that the United States would be looking for to achieve in that country? And is there a certain security metric, a certain measurable level of security we are hoping to reach? In other words, going along with that, what would it take for you to be comfortable in saying that we would no longer at some point need a troop presence in Afghanistan?

General DUNFORD. Senator, the focus post-2014 is all about growing capabilities and capacities of the Afghans. Some of the remaining challenges, they started at the ministerial level. So minister of defense and minister of interior, they cannot manage a budget right now. As an example, last year the minister of defense only executed a very small percentage of the budget they actually had. It was not due to corruption, it was due to bureaucratic inefficiency. And so growing the capabilities and capacities of the ministry are very, very important to be able to sustain our efforts.

By the same token, there are logistics issues, so having a logistics infrastructure in place, taking a sure distribution of supplies and parts all the way down to the lowest tactical level is an area that needs to continue to be worked on. And I spoke about a minute ago, leadership development is also important.

So when I start to look at what we need to do past 2014, to be clear, our effort will not be to provide security inside of Afghanistan. Our effort will be to advise the Afghan Security Forces so that what we have done over the past several years is actually sustainable, and we will be able to measure that sustainability over time and gradually reduce our presence.

Senator LEE. You have got the metrics in place to do that?

General DUNFORD. We do have the metrics in place, Senator, that both address where we have to be for proficiency at the ministerial level, as well as we have 14 functional areas that we evaluate in our tactical units that allow us to determine where they are and what support they may need to improve to take it to the next level.

Senator LEE. The Department of Defense is currently spending about \$10 billion more conducting the war effort in Afghanistan this year than was estimated would be necessary. And from what we understand, in order to make up for this underestimation, the Department of Defense will, of course, have to pull from other funds from its base budget, which is, of course, difficult because of the cuts we are facing as a result of sequestration and the other long-term spending limits imposed by the Budget Control Act of 2011.

I understand the problems with trying to budget and plan for a war a year in advance and how unforeseen costs can arise. At the same time, a \$10 billion miscalculation is a little bit alarming, especially just given all the other forces—all the other pressures that we face in the Department of Defense.

So, General, can you explain to us how that underestimation occurred?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I am not aware that we inside of U.S. Forces-Afghanistan underestimated by \$10 billion our requirements for this year. I can assure you that we have gone back and looked at every dollar that we are spending to make sure we are spending it to good effect. And we have significantly reduced, in fact, particularly in the area of military construction, significantly reduced the money that we are spending in Afghanistan.

I will go back and take a look at where that projection came from and why we are in the position we are in right now. But that is not something I was aware of.

Senator LEE. Okay. Okay. Yeah, we can follow up with that with you after this hearing. So let me talk about Pakistan for a minute because it is impossible to cover the gamut of issues that we face in Afghanistan without also discussing the influence of Pakistan and Pakistan's behavior.

We have spent billions of dollars in Pakistan since September 11th, 2001, for security and for economic assistance. But Pakistan, some would say, can at times seem to be more of an obstacle than a partner in the progress of the region, you know, from closing the borders, to NATO supplies that ties with the ties of the ISI to extremist groups, to the lack of cooperation in the hunt for Osama bin Laden, and the subcommittee imprisonment of Dr. Afridi for his assistance to the United States.

What is your personal assessment, General, of the relationship between the United States and Pakistan, and the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan moving forward?

General DUNFORD. Senator, on the first piece, first, I think we would agree that we have vital national interests in Pakistan in the sense that the nexus between extremism and nuclear weapons would be catastrophic.

I personally have watched how we have dealt with Pakistan over the years. In the 1990s, we decided to isolate Pakistan as a result of the Pressler Amendment, and then we stopped conducting military to military engagements. I now see the adverse effect of that policy that took place for over a decade because my generation of leaders does not have personal relationships with our Pakistani counterparts to work through some of these issues.

So I think there has to be balance. I think it is in our interest to have a strategic partnership with Pakistan, and we need to manage the relationship with the end in sight, which is that professional and deep strategic partnership over time, which of course today is something that needs work.

With regard to Afghanistan and Pakistan, my objective before transition in 2014 is to ensure that we have a construction mil to mil relationship, military to military relationship, between Afghanistan and Pakistan. It will absolutely be at the tactical level, but

I think it can be a foundation for a deeper relationship over time. The relationship will take much.

I am optimistic because, as I mentioned earlier, General Kayani and his leaders as well as Afghan leaders will meet with me later this month. We do have a number of exchanges going on right now.

Senator LEE. So looking forward then to a post-2014 environment, do you believe these multibillion payments to Pakistan ought to continue regardless of whether or to what extent there is a continued American presence or a continued NATO troop presence in Afghanistan?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I believe we need to maintain a very constructive, effective relationship with Pakistan. We need to recognize the very real threat that Pakistan has inside of its own borders. And from my perspective, we ought to do whatever it takes to ensure our vital national interests in that particular part of the world are protected.

Senator LEE. Okay. Well, one of the things that I am always looking to in looking to that kind of aid is whether or not it does serve the military purpose. You are saying we need to do whatever it takes to continue that relationship. And are you saying that payments of that size and of that nature are what is going to be required in the long run?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I believe it is in our best interest to continue to develop the Pakistani army and to ensure that they can effectively deal with security within their borders. I would not tell you that every single program that we have in place right is one we ought to sustain in the future. That is not something I pay particular attention to right now in my current duties, but I am absolutely adamant that we ought to maintain a close relationship with Pakistan and help them to develop the resources to be able to provide security.

Senator LEE. And your fear would be that if we were to cut all of that off abruptly, that we could end up in the same kind of dynamic that you are describing where the military to military relationships do not exist.

General DUNFORD. Senator, I believe that Pakistan has a very real threat inside their borders right now, and I do not believe that they can deal with that particular threat without external support.

Senator LEE. Okay. Thank you, General.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Lee.

Senator Udall.

Senator UDALL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, General. Thank you of course for being here and for your incredible sacrifice and service to our country.

Let me move right to the Afghan general elections in 2014. When we met, we agreed that it would be difficult to overstate the importance of those elections. In your assessment, what needs to happen between now and April 2014 to ensure that the elections are not only free and fair, but recognized to be free and fair by the Afghan public?

General DUNFORD. Senator, the first precondition for successful elections is obviously the security environment. And so as I mentioned earlier, summer of 2013, from my perspective, is very impor-

tant. We need to emerge from the summer of 2013 with security in those areas, particularly those areas that are important to the elections. We need to emerge from the summer of 2013 with the perception of security so that people want to participate in the elections.

I think one of the things that will determine whether they are viewed as free and fair is if they are inclusive. And so, you know, I imagine there are 7,000 polling stations, and we need to make sure that there is security such that people have access to those polling stations in April. So from a security perspective, that is very important.

The minister of interior has the lead on security. We are decisively engaged, and my intent is to provide whatever support the Afghan National Security Forces need to us to provide to make sure the elections are successful in 2014.

Senator UDALL. Let me move to the ALP, the Afghan local police. We talked about their important role, and you talked about how the Taliban sees that program. If my memory is right, you said that the ALP is one of the most significant issues that the Taliban will have to address in order to be successful. Do you still hold that view? To what extent does the ALP need to be funded and manned at high levels? And is the ALP a sustainable initiative as we draw down our coalition troops?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I absolutely continue to believe that the ALP is critical to our success. It is an important component in that layered security concept I spoke to earlier. And for all the reasons I spoke about, I have confidence in their ability.

We have about 21,000 what they call guardians or member of the ALP today. There is planned growth for 30,000. The minister of interior has requested to grow that figure to 45,000. What I have asked my staff to do is review that in June or July this year to ensure that we do not look at the ALP other than in the full context of Afghan Security Forces and the effect that we are trying to achieve post-2014.

But I am a big believer in the Afghan local police initiative. I believe it is one of the critical components of security post-2014. And I believe it is sustainable, and it has Afghan ownership right now. I mean, in many cases, it is the Afghans who are identifying the areas where we want—where they want ALP to be established.

Senator UDALL. Yeah, I do not think you could overstate or I could overstate the utility of local ownership in the sense that these police forces work for us, not for the coalition, not for anybody else, but for the local communities.

Let me move to the heavy responsibility you have, and that is that you are simultaneously preparing for this year's fighting season and you are planning for troop reductions over the next 20 minutes. In your opening statement, you mentioned a range of capabilities and units that the ASF, the Afghan Security Forces, currently lack.

And in that light, would you recommend that aviation assets, DOD support, and other capabilities be provided by our military after 2014? And on a related note, will the U.S. Government civilian agencies be able to sustain their current levels of personnel and

assistance without having a robust NATO military network in place?

General DUNFORD. Senator, there are certain capability gaps, and you highlighted the most important ones, and I would say the most important one would be close air support. And so I would recommend where appropriate that we would provide close air support to the Afghans post-2014. We have seen several times recently where the absence of that kind of close air support created difficulties for Afghan forces, and we will not have addressed the capabilities of the Afghanistan air forces until 2015 or 2016. That is the program of record as it currently exists. So there will be a gap between 2014 in the full operational capability of the Afghan air force. When that gap exists, where it is important to sustain our success, I would recommend that we provide that support.

With regard to the civilian agencies, earlier I mentioned that I believe we should be in the four corners of Afghanistan post-2014. One of the reasons why I believe that is not only to provide the right level of advise and assist to our Afghan counterparts, but also to support the U.S. Government interagency. And Ambassador Cunningham in Kabul and I have complete integration in terms of planning for post-2014. I understand what his requirements are from an embassy perspective, and they are part of our planning for post-2014.

Senator UDALL. I will not ask you to answer this question, but I think it is incumbent on all of us to think about the president's, as in President Karzai's, behaviors and comments at times about air support, about our soft forces and the like. And we should consider what his reaction will be to the continuation of close air support moving forward. I just make that comment.

Let me turn to sequestration if I might. What are your concerns? To what extent will sequestration have a negative effect on the mission and the readiness of the troops that will rotate into that theater between now and 2014, and perhaps beyond?

General DUNFORD. Senator, you hit it exactly right. From my perspective, I have been told that sequestration will not affect the resources that we have available to our men and women on the ground inside of Afghanistan, and I believe that. My greatest concern is that it will impact the readiness of those units who are at home station preparing to deploy to Afghanistan.

I think one of the great success stories over the last 10 years has been the quality training and equipping that we provided to our young men and women in uniform. Training today, there is no comparison to what training was earlier in my career. That is as a result of the support of the Congress. That is as a result of leadership learning lessons over the last 10 years, and I think it is very, very important that we sustain that same high level of training in the coming years because we will still have people in harm's way.

Senator UDALL. Let me move back to the Taliban and the threats that they present, but also the opportunity for the Afghan Government and for us. I think we share a concern that the Taliban could become viewed by the public as the best arbitrator in dispute resolutions. If the national government or even provincial officials are viewed as corrupt, then Afghans could be tempted to turn to the Taliban and their courts to resolve their problems. And then if you

add into that the sense that the Afghan Government is a predatory actor that takes private land unfairly or without compensation, that provides the Taliban power and influence potentially.

Is it reasonable to expect that these types of practices which are counterproductive can be halted?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I believe it is not so much halting them as providing an alternative which would cause them to be irrelevant. And I do believe that dispute resolution is a core function of subnational governance in Afghanistan, and it is one of the critical areas. The rule of law in general is one of the critical areas that the Afghans have to improve in order for our success to be sustainable in the future. There is no question about it.

Senator UDALL. General, again, thank you for your service. Thanks for making the long trip here from theater. I look forward to working with you as we move forward at this really crucial point in time in our involvement in Afghanistan.

General DUNFORD. Thank you, Senator.

Senator UDALL. Thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Udall.

Senator Blunt.

Senator BLUNT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Your mike.

Senator BLUNT. Almost turned it on. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, General, for spending time with us today.

I want to follow up first on Senator Graham's comments on the tension of somebody we capture, a third country national. My impression is that there is really no plan as to what to do with them in the future.

General DUNFORD. Senator, we do not have a decision on what to do with them in the future. In fact, next week we have a team led by the Office of Secretary of Defense to come over and to work through this issue. This issue is not a new issue. It has been worked.

Senator BLUNT. Right.

General DUNFORD. I just do not have the decision about the disposition of those detainees as we approach 2014.

Senator BLUNT. What would be the risk of not agreeing to a plan for those detainees?

General DUNFORD. Senator, these are people that absolutely have to be kept behind bars, so we need a plan to detain these individuals, in most cases, on an enduring basis.

Senator BLUNT. And is it our view that the Afghans would not be the best people to be in charge of these detainees?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I do not know if that is a viable alternative right now. First of all, I do not know what the Afghan desire would be for those third country nationals or the legal framework within which the Afghans would be able to keep them.

The Afghans have moved to an evidence-based process now for detention operations. We, of course, use a law of armed conflict framework. And so I am not sure that the Afghan process would allow us to keep those third country nationals detained beyond 2014. That is something we would have to take a very close look at.

Senator BLUNT. Okay. Okay, thank you. On the force, you mentioned about 350,000 Afghan forces. This would not be the police forces, but the other forces?

General DUNFORD. No, Senator, that is the aggregate of both the police and the army, less the Afghan local police. So the 352,000 would be all the Afghan uniformed police—

Senator BLUNT. Right.

General DUNFORD.—all the Afghan army, the border police, and then over and above that 352,000 right now is the Afghan local police, which are approved for a level of 30,000.

Senator BLUNT. And how big a problem does attrition continue to be?

General DUNFORD. Attrition in the Afghan army is a significant challenge. We have nearly 30 percent attrition. In the police, it is much better. It is at or above the goal of 15 to 16 percent. The local police is very, very low. And so the army is the area where attrition is of greatest concern.

Senator BLUNT. And is it highest as you get closer to fighting season?

General DUNFORD. Senator, we have not seen a direct correlation between the fighting season and the attrition. We have seen a direct correlation between leadership and attrition.

Senator BLUNT. What size force as you contemplate us leaving—I guess I want two questions here. One is what size force do we have to leave to get people and equipment out successfully? And then second, what size force should we hope that the Afghans can maintain and sustain?

General DUNFORD. Senator, with regard to our equipment, there is really three aspects of closing down in Afghanistan. One is the retrograde of equipment that would come back here to the United States to reset our services. The other is base closure and material reduction.

The equipment that is needed to reset our forces, we will get that equipment out by the end of 2014. We still in all likelihood be closing out bases and reducing materials, that is, returning the ground to the way we found it, post-2014. And so we will need some element to be able to do that. Currently, the size of that element is 2,500 soldiers that help us with that. I expect we will need some similar organization post-2014. That is called a CENTCOM. It is a logistics unit that actually works in the United States Central Command.

And with regard to the Afghans, I think we now are looking at that 352,000 force being sustained through 2018 as being the best recommendation.

Senator BLUNT. And what level of help will the Afghans need from outside to sustain a force that big?

General DUNFORD. In accordance with the Chicago Conference, Senator, they will through 2018, the vast majority of the money necessary to sustain that force is going to come from the United States and international partners.

Senator BLUNT. The vast majority of that money will come from outside—

General DUNFORD. Absolutely, of about \$5 billion to sustain that force, the Afghans will pay approximately \$500 million. So the pre-

ponderance of the resources necessary to sustain Afghan forces post-2014 would come from the international community in the United States.

Senator BLUNT. And on removing our people from Afghanistan, at what point do you leave—at what point do the people that are there face real danger, and how many people do we need to leave there to safely get everything—the other people out?

General DUNFORD. Senator, there are a couple of things. One is that we will make that decision based on the security environment, based on the capabilities and capacities of the Afghans, who will provide the security environment within which we draw down. But as General Dempsey says, we are never going to ask 10 soldiers to do more than 10 soldiers' worth of work. And we will very much shrink the perimeter, figuratively speaking, in Afghanistan in a way that keeps, first, protection first and foremost.

Senator BLUNT. And one other question on facilities that we have there. You mentioned returning the situation back to the way it was before the facility was built. Do we have any kind of process we go through with the Afghans to decide if they would like things left there that otherwise are just of no value?

General DUNFORD. We do, Senator. We have a very detailed plan for Afghan infrastructure to sustain Afghan forces post-2014. Some of that infrastructure is being transitioned from coalition forces to Afghans, but all the infrastructure that is over and above their ability to sustain over time. And we have a very detailed plan that links the infrastructure that the Afghans will maintain post-2014 with the resources we project will be available to sustain that infrastructure. We want to make sure there is a balance between the projected resources for sustainment and the numbers of facilities that the Afghans keep. So those facilities that cannot be sustained post-2014 are the ones I talked about that we would reduce back to the way we found it.

Senator BLUNT. And do we go beyond just the military use of those facilities to hospital, school, some other use? Do we have a checklist like that or not?

General DUNFORD. We do, Senator. In fact, that is led by the Afghan Government, the minister of finance. So if local governance—local governments want to have infrastructure, they submit a request up to the minister of finance. The Afghan Government is responsible for determining the sustainability of that, and then the minister of finance would come to us with a request for a specific piece of infrastructure to be maintained.

Senator BLUNT. Well, thank you, General. You have had a tough assignment, and it looks like to me it is not going to get a lot easier. And I wish you well with it, you and those people you work with. Thank you for what you do for us.

General DUNFORD. Thanks, Senator.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Blunt.

Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. Good morning, General Dunford. Thank you for appearing before us today. I want to ask about a couple of items starting with budgetary questions, and there have been a number already about sequester. But I did a tour of Langley Air Force Base in Virginia a couple of weeks back, and we talked about this issue

of the warfighter being protected in sequester. But I was surprised to find that many of the military personnel that maintain the F-22s are not defined as the warfighters. And so some of the sequester and budgetary issues are affecting their ability to maintain aircraft, and that is one of the factors that then leads to the step down of readiness of some of the F-22 units.

As you are—you know, with 60,000 folks under your command in Afghanistan, while the war fighters may be protected, how does the sequester and some of the other budgetary challenges impinge upon your mission? And, in particular, I think about things about the retrograding of equipment. Is that something that is viewed as a core war fighting mission, or is that a part of the mission that is subject to some of these budgetary reductions?

Senator DUNFORD. Senator, all the functions that we are performing inside of Afghanistan to include retrograde are considered warfighting functions. And so I have been assured by the Secretary of Defense and the chairman that there will not be an adverse impact in those areas. But I think you highlighted a really important point, and that is units that are at home station, and I know from my previous assignment as the assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, it is very difficult to say we will properly resource those units that are next to deploy and not support those who are not next to deploy. It is not that clean.

And so as we start to see degradation of readiness at home station, there is absolutely no doubt that that degradation of readiness in home station will affect both units that are next to deploy as well as those not slated currently for deployment.

Senator KAINE. On the retrograding question, and there may have been a question asked about this before I came over from the Senate floor. But just talk about the current status of the relationship with Pakistan as it affects retrograding of equipment out of Afghanistan.

Senator DUNFORD. Senator, we just completed about two months of proofs of principle to move equipment from Afghanistan into Pakistan and through the Port of Karachi, as well as to move the backlogged equipment that has been there for almost a year from Pakistan into Afghanistan. In fact, we are largely clear of the backlog that was in Pakistan, moving it into Afghanistan.

We also have successfully completed those proofs of principle, and so we now will be looking over the next 45 to 60 days to actually maximize the movement across the ground lines of communication into Pakistan.

So at this point, it is moving in the right direction after a very long period of time where those ground lines of communication were not available. We are in a good place.

Senator KAINE. General, you had a good colloquy with Senator Lee that I was watching about Pakistan, about the importance of the relationship. And I think many members of the committee and many senators look at certain actions that the Pakistani Government with a lot of concern, the imprisonment of Dr. Afridi and others. At the same time, we also, you know, understand that Pakistan has lost as many people in the fight against terrorism, and al Qaeda, and the Taliban, and other elements as any of our allies.

And you alluded to, but did not go too deeply, into the question of the nuclear arsenal in Pakistan. From a security standpoint, it is not one of the main issues that the United States needs to worry about is an unstable Pakistan that could potentially jeopardize the security of the nuclear arsenal there. And that is one of the reasons that we need to be so diligent in not distancing ourselves from Pakistan, but continuing to work to the greatest degree we can as partners for the ultimate security of that nuclear arsenal.

Senator DUNFORD. Senator, I believe we have common cause with the Pakistanis in that regard. I think they increasingly recognize the threat of extremism. We certainly have been dealing with that for some years. And so, to the extent that I think we have at least an effective relationship in dealing with that extremist threat over the next couple of years, I think Pakistan's increased appreciation of the threat will be helpful in that regard.

Senator KAINE. General, you talked with Senator Graham a little bit about drones and the use of drones, and I just would like to expand and go deeper into that question. There is a strong military rationale, and we have been able to use drones in a way that have provided us significant advantage in the military mission. And yet we also, you know, as a body, as a military, as a Congress, weigh the effect of the drone program on the civilian populations in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Talk to us a little bit about the current state of affairs in Afghanistan in terms of how our drone program affects the civilian population's acceptance of our mission and whether it leads to, you know, additional violence against our troops.

Senator DUNFORD. Senator, we employ unmanned vehicles in Afghanistan. We have the same standard for proportionality and discrimination with those as we do with manned vehicles. So mitigation of civilian casualties is no different whether there is a pilot in the cockpit or not.

And before we would employ force in Afghanistan, we ensure that we have positive identification of target. We identify individuals with hostile intent, and we do a very clear assessment of the collateral damage that might be associated with a particular strike.

I am actually quite proud of our forces over the last 18 months in terms of all that we have done to mitigate the risk of civilian casualties. But I do not think there is a direct relationship between a method, a tool, which is what an unmanned vehicle is, and collateral damage or civilian casualties. I think it is the employment of that tool which is most important, and I think we are employing those tools in a way that mitigates the risk of civilian casualties.

Senator KAINE. General, even beyond civilian casualties, because I have a high degree of confidence that you are deploying the tool in that way to minimize collateral damage and civilian casualties. How about the civilian perception, the attitudes that the drone program brings about? Even if we are doing it perfectly, if it creates a, you know, a great deal of controversy within the civilian community, that can make our challenge more difficult down the road. What is your perception of the Afghani civilian population's understanding of the program as we implement it?

Senator DUNFORD. Inside of Afghanistan, Senator, I have not detected any concern by the average civilians over those vehicles. I

think that is in large part because of the way we employ them. I would tell you that the Taliban are very concerned about those vehicles, and they talk about them all the time.

Senator KAINE. Let me move to another issue about the presidential elections. You know, I think our presence post-2014 is sort of designed to address two conflicting issues: first, that we are not an occupying force, but second, we are not going to abandon Afghanistan. And trying to meet both of those goals is challenging.

What do you think our recent announcements and policy in this country about post-2014 troop levels, what effect are they likely to have on the outcome of the 2014 presidential elections?

Senator DUNFORD. Senator, you are exactly right. The message of occupier and abandonment, while seemingly inconsistent, exists in the same space. I am optimistic that we can address this as we set the condition for the elections in '14 in a couple of ways. One is the message of us as an occupier is actually not going to resonate as the Afghans assume the lead in 2013. What the Afghan people will see on a day-to-day basis is Afghan Security Forces providing security. So the message that the Taliban have had of us an occupier or the Afghans being a tool of occupiers I do not believe will resonate in 2013 as the Afghans take the lead.

With regard to the message of abandonment, the bilateral security agreement is a component or commitment post-2014 is a component. But what really is necessary is that the United States and the international community convey a credible, consistent, and comprehensive message of commitment post-2014. Together with that commitment and the Afghans in the lead, I think both the message of us an occupier and the message of us abandoning the Afghan people gets undermined.

And I think what you are alluding is a really important in that it is the information environment that will in large part determine the success of the elections in 2014. And the messaging that we are talking about here is very, very important. A strong narrative of commitment and a strong narrative of Afghans' credible, to the fore, in the lead for providing security, I believe is a critical component to success of the elections in 2014.

Senator KAINE. General Dunford, thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Kaine.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, General Dunford, thank you very much for your service and for taking on this very challenging job at such a critical time.

I want to go back to further discussion about the relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan because I agree with your view of it. That is critical, and our—whatever we can do to help smooth that relationship and really foster it is very important.

Now, President Karzai has repeatedly accused Islamabad of trying to undermine the peace process between Afghanistan and the Taliban. Does Karzai's accusation have any substance to it? And can you update us on whether or not there is actually a reconciliation process underway?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I do not know if there is any credibility to President Karzai's statement about Pakistan undermining the peace process with the Taliban. And the State Department, of

course, is working very hard. The President has identified political reconciliation as one of his priorities; that is, President Obama. And so, I know the State Department is working very hard to do that.

There is an office being opened in Doha. I think we are waiting now for the Taliban to meet their end of the bargain in terms of moving the process ahead. But that is not a process that I am deeply engaged in on a routine basis. From my perspective, my job is to set the conditions that would facilitate reconciliation; that is, the conditions on the ground.

But with regard to Afghanistan and Pakistan and President Karzai's comments, I think they merely highlight the very deep mistrust that currently exists and has historically existed between Pakistan and Afghanistan. And I think that is what we have to do is in our efforts to bring, especially in a military to military perspective, is if we can bring that relationship together in a constructive way and establish a foundation of trust, I think just like our Nation when we do military to military engagements, that can be the foundation of something deeper, some strategic partnership that would obviously take years to develop.

But I believe that that military to military bilateral relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan needs to be one of our objectives. It is—and I did not mention it earlier; I should have—that is one of the components I believe is critical to winning is affecting a constructive bilateral relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan so that tactical issues along the border area do not actually have an adverse strategic impact.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, one of the areas of tension, as you point out, has been that border. When I was there in 2011, we saw that very directly. And one of the things that you talk about in your testimony is the effort to improve that cross border coordination with the tripartite border standard operating procedure, I think you called it.

Can you talk about whether that has actually improved as the result of that, and what the potential is to keep that going post-2014 when obviously those border issues will continue because there is a basic disagreement about where the border—who controls what along the border.

General DUNFORD. Senator, I can. We did sign that agreement back in the fall, and as a result now, we have an exchange of information. In the event of cross border firing and so forth, that is very helpful.

I can give you a recent example. About three weeks ago, the Pakistanis began to do some construction on a border post that is in the—it is in the border region. So it is disputed as to where exactly that border post is, whether it is in Afghan territory or Pakistani territory.

Initially, the Pakistanis brought forces up to the border point because of tensions. The Afghans indicated that they were not going to stand for that border post being approved, and their forces were given the authority to use force in the event that was necessary.

We used the tripartite process called border flags process to bring together senior Afghan leadership, senior Pakistan leadership, coa-

lition forces. We did that as recently as yesterday, again with the border flags meeting, that attempts to de-escalate the situation.

In this particular case, the issue is still out there. It is not permanently resolved, but over the last three weeks we have been able to de-escalate and manage the crisis as a result of this tripartite agreement.

What is most important is that we eventually migrate that to a bilateral relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan. But I actually think it is not only possible, it is happening right now, and I think both the leadership on the Pakistani side as well as the Afghan side recognize that tactical issues must be addressed at a tactical level and not allowed to bleed over into the strategic relationship. And even President Karzai has acknowledged that to me, and he is very supportive of a mil to mil relationship in order to address these disputes.

So, Senator, I think that, you know, while cautiously optimistic, I am optimistic that we are moving in the right direction.

Senator SHAHEEN. That is encouraging. Can you—you have talked a fair amount this morning about what our presence might look like post-2014. Can you talk about the commitment of our NATO partners after 2014, and how robust that might be, and whether there is agreement about what that presence should look like?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I attended the defense ministerial in Brussels in February, and at that time, the collective defense ministers agreed that they would contribute between 8,000 to 12,000 forces for post-2014. And they gave that guidance for general planning to take place.

I think it is fair to say that our coalition partners are very much looking to see what the U.S. contribution will be post-2014 before making a commitment. And also in many cases, our coalition partners will need U.S. enabling support before they are able to commit. And by enabling support, in most cases I mean specifically casualty evacuation, MEDEVAC, medical evacuation post-2014, which they cannot provide, but would need that to be in place in order for them to be committed post-2014.

Senator SHAHEEN. And so, is there anything that we should be doing in the lead up to 2014 to provide those assurances to folks so that everybody is in agreement on what happens?

General DUNFORD. I do, Senator. I know that the President is deliberating now, but as he makes a decision about the basic framework—you know, he already committed—certainly committed to President Karzai as recently as January that we would be there in some significant way post-2014. But as President Obama makes his specific decision, then I think it is going to be incumbent upon all of us at all levels to engage our coalition partners to ensure that we build the same effective coalition post-2014 that we have had over the past several years.

I think it is a huge success story the way we brought NATO together to accomplish the mission inside of Afghanistan. And I think it is important that we maintain that same level of commitment for the alliance post-2014.

So I think in terms of sequencing, once the President makes his decision and certainly discusses that with his counterparts in the

coalition, I think we will then start to see the coalition partners make their own decisions. But their ability to generate the political will to contribute post-2014 and do the budgetary planning necessary for post-2014 in large part rests with the U.S. decision and what our presence will be post-2014.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much. My time is up, but I should say, just offer my condolences. As a Boston native, I am sure you share the concern that we all felt yesterday looking at what happened at the Boston Marathon. So hopefully you did not have any family members who were affected.

General DUNFORD. No. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

Senator Ayotte.

Senator AYOTTE. Hi, General.

General DUNFORD. Senator.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you so much for being here today and for your service to our country. We appreciate very much your leadership.

I wanted to ask, first of all, about the transport of the detainees into Afghan control for the Parwan detention facility, and how is that going. And can you also tell me if we capture, for example, a target, in particular, a foreign national or a high value target, even who is an Afghan, that may have intelligence that is helpful to preventing future attacks. How do you we handle that situation in light of the detention transfer?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I can talk to you about the transfer. One of the last things I did before I left Afghanistan, and it was about 10 days after the transfer, I walked down to Parwan, spent about four hours on the ground with the leadership down there, and walked through each and every function that is being performed inside the facility to ensure that the partnership arrangement that we had with the Afghans protected our interests. And I am satisfied right now that it does in the sense that we still have good control over the detainees, we have visibility, and we are in a position to ensure that there is humane treatment taking place inside of the facility.

With regard to future targets, a couple of things. One is we have a commitment by Afghanistan that they will not only keep in detention the enduring security threats that we have identified in the past, but any future enduring security threats would also be detained.

And I would prefer to talk about the intelligence piece in a closed forum.

Senator AYOTTE. Okay.

General DUNFORD. But I would tell you in this forum that I am satisfied that we will have appropriate access and intelligence sharing with the Afghans.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you, General. I appreciate that, and we can follow up in a more appropriate forum on the intelligence gathering.

And with respect—you said that the enduring security threats, those that are detainees obviously that would continue to represent a threat, you said you are satisfied that the Afghans will maintain control of those individuals. So I think you and I both would want

to avoid a Doc Dook type situation. And so, can you assure us that—how this agreement is with the Afghans, and to your satisfaction that we will not have that kind of situation?

General DUNFORD. Senator, we have a commitment from President Karzai to President Obama that those individuals will be detained. What I have said to the chairman and what I have said to the chain of command is that were Afghanistan not to meet their commitment, we would have real operational and policy issues to address at that particular time. I think it would change in some way the fundamental nature of our operations, and certainly change the nature of support that we might provide to Afghanistan in the future.

So what I am saying now is that we have an agreement with Afghanistan to keep those ESTs detained, enduring security threats. And were they to violate that commitment, I am satisfied that that would be a significant change in our relationship, a significant change in the nature of operations, and we would have to deal with that at the time.

Senator AYOTTE. Okay. Thank you, General. I wanted to follow up on the questions that Senator Blumenthal asked you about, and I appreciated your testimony. Senator Brown and I were original sponsors of the No Contracting With the Enemy provisions, and Senator Blumenthal and I had the opportunity to travel to Afghanistan in January together. And as a result of that, we have introduced legislation called Never Contracting With the Enemy—how is that—to try to fill in some of the gaps to improve—we made significant progress with the No Contracting With the Enemy, but to fill in some of the gaps, including to drop the contract level from \$100,000 to \$20,000 as you had mentioned earlier.

But it is not just the DOD that is contracting. What other agencies are contracting in Afghanistan?

General DUNFORD. USAID, Senator. I think that, you know, as you are describing the new legislation, it will be critical that not only DOD that has contracts, but the State Department, and, specific, USAID, which has a significant role in contracting in Afghanistan. They would have the same authorities that we do; that is, do not contract with the enemy.

Senator AYOTTE. And have you already—from your perspective, have we already been able to save taxpayer dollars with the No Contracting With the Enemy provisions?

General DUNFORD. Senator, we have been able to save taxpayer dollars, but, more importantly, we have been able to prevent those dollars from being in the hands of the enemy who would do us harm.

Senator AYOTTE. And so, do you—with our legislation that Senator Blumenthal raised to you, is this something you would endorse that we hopefully would get passed this year?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I would. I think anything that would keep resources out of the hands of the enemy would be a positive step. And so far the legislation has been very effective both with subcontractors and contractors. And expanding that to include non-DOD organizations makes a lot of sense.

Senator AYOTTE. Great, thank you. And I also want—Major General Longo was very helpful to us in helping us put together this

legislation, so we are grateful certainly for his support as well. And so thank you for that.

I wanted to ask you about the follow-on for us in 2014 and beyond. With each area of Afghanistan, thinking about the follow-on recommendations that you will make to the President, how important is it that we have a presence in all four regions of Afghanistan?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I think it is very important that we be in all four regions. From my perspective, it starts with, I think, the lowest level at which we should advise and assist post-2014 is at the Afghanistan corps level. They have six corps level headquarters, and they are in the four corners of the country.

I also think being in the four corners of the country will help us to better support the State Department's mission. As I mentioned earlier, I am completely integrated with Ambassador Cunningham in terms of planning for U.S. presence post-2014. So I believe being in the four corners is going to be necessary for us to ensure that the gains that we have made with the Afghan forces are sustainable post-2014.

Senator AYOTTE. When we look at Iran and their role in Afghanistan, thinking particularly post-2014, what area of the country are you most worried about with respect to Iran in terms of having a presence?

General DUNFORD. It is in the west, Senator. It is in the Herat region, and we certainly see today evidence of malign Iranian influence. We certainly see today great effort made by Iran to control what goes inside of Afghanistan.

I am happy to report that many of the resources have not fallen on fertile ground. They have tried to do things that they have been unsuccessful in doing. But they absolutely have great interest and influence in the western part of the country.

Senator AYOTTE. And if we were not to have a presence or a sufficient presence in the western part of the country looking at our post-2014 posture, along with our NATO allies, what influence—type of influence do you think Iran would have, and what do you think that they would do with that?

General DUNFORD. I think it is fair to say that they would have influence in the western part of the country. I think it is also fair to say if past is prologue, that that influence would be maligned and could be destabilizing for Afghanistan.

Senator AYOTTE. How is it going in terms of negotiating the bilateral security agreement?

General DUNFORD. Senator, the next meeting of the bilateral security agreement is May. The last thing I did before I left is I met with Ambassador Hakimi, the Afghan ambassador to the United States. He is the primary negotiator for Afghanistan. All I can say is that at least on the Afghan side, his sense was that things were moving in the right direction. He was positive that we would be able to sign the bilateral security agreement. President Karzai has said the same thing to me.

There are two or three difficult issues that we are working through right now. They are non-negotiable from a U.S. perspective. And so I think the team is working very hard to address that right now.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you very much, General. I appreciate your leadership and all of those that serve underneath you. You do an excellent job.

General DUNFORD. Thank you, Senator.

Senator AYOTTE. Thanks.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Ayotte.

I just have a few additional questions, General. One is the use of the term “safe haven” and “sanctuary.” I have always used them interchangeably, and obviously you do not. At least I think that became obvious in some of your early conversation this morning. Can you explain to us the difference in your vocabulary between the two? Who has got what where?

General DUNFORD. I can, Mr. Chairman. We use the term “safe haven” in an area from which we cannot get at the enemy or in an area within which the enemy has freedom of movement. Inside of Afghanistan, we use the term “safe haven.” “Sanctuary,” we use that with regard to Pakistan.

So when we talk about enemy safe havens, just so we are clear, inside the force. When we talk about enemy safe havens, we are talking about areas that are geographically within Afghanistan, and then obviously sanctuaries being those areas outside of Afghanistan.

Chairman LEVIN. I think there is some confusion about those terms. I will just talk about my mind. I will not talk about others, but I am confident that colleagues also have used the terms interchangeably, and that that may have led to some of the comments this morning. I am guessing on that because you said that—I believe you said that—I thought you were referring to the Taliban not having a sanctuary in Pakistan, but I think you would agree that the Taliban does have a sanctuary inside Pakistan. The Afghans—excuse me—the Afghan Taliban. Would you agree?

General DUNFORD. Absolutely, Mr. Chairman. And in the exchange earlier, I thought we were talking about al Qaeda.

Chairman LEVIN. Yeah, and you may have been. I may have misheard it, but I think there was some real uncertainty, at least my staff also felt—I am not talking about your comments necessarily, but in the exchange, that there was some uncertainty as to what was being referred to in Afghanistan because it is clear that there is a sanctuary for the Afghan Taliban inside of Pakistan. Is that correct?

General DUNFORD. Mr. Chairman, there is no doubt. And there is also the Pakistani Taliban moving, in some cases, freely in the eastern part of Afghanistan and back into Pakistan.

Chairman LEVIN. All right. I think probably in the future, it would be wise for you to pin that down when talking to Members of Congress because I have heard it repeatedly used interchangeably. Again, I will just point to myself, not to others. And I am not saying it is a mistake one way or the other, but it is used interchangeably by many colleagues, I believe, and it surely is myself. So I am going to try to be more accurate in the future, particularly when I am talking to one of our military leaders. But I think in the common ordinary sense of the word out in the public, that there has not been that distinction which has been made, and you should be aware of that if I am accurate, okay?

General DUNFORD. I will do that, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Okay. And second, I want to ask you about the time table for the decision as to the number of troops that would be there after 2014. I think that most of us, maybe all of us, agree that we need to have a credible commitment, the earlier the better. That is important, for the uncertainty that does exist in Afghanistan to be removed both in the eyes of the people, the government, that clearly want an ongoing presence that is credible. It is also important for the Taliban to understand there will be an ongoing, credible commitment from the United States.

As to the specific number of that, you have not made a—numerically what that commitment would amount to in terms of troops, you have not made your recommendation yet, and you have indicated today that there are a number of factors which can affect your judgment as to what that proper number or range would be. So far, am I right?

General DUNFORD. Yes, General.

Chairman LEVIN. Okay. Now, the one issue, however, that, and you have spoken on this and I want to be real clear on, is that in your mind in making your recommendation, that it is essential that there be a bilateral security agreement that protects whatever number of troops we have that are there, for instance. Another is on the sovereignty issue. We are very careful about protecting our troops that are in a foreign country so that they are not, if it is not appropriate, subject to the judicial arm of other countries if we do not think that it is appropriate for that to be case, and under what circumstances will an American soldier, or marine, or whatever, be subject to foreign jurisdiction. And we are very, very protective of our troops. Is that correct?

General DUNFORD. Mr. Chairman, that is absolutely correct.

Chairman LEVIN. And that is set out in a bilateral security agreement. It is supposed to be set forth, is that right?

General DUNFORD. That is exactly right, Mr. Chairman. In other countries, of course, it is the status of forces agreement, and that really is a subset of the bilateral security agreement.

Chairman LEVIN. All right. And so, whatever commitment that is made, in your judgment, should be conditional upon a working out of a bilateral security agreement. Is that fair to say?

General DUNFORD. Absolutely, Mr. Chairman. Any authority that we have to operate post-2014 would be within the framework of a bilateral security agreement. As the U.N. mandate expires in December 2014, and the military technical agreement expires in 2014, our presence post-2014 would be based on the bilateral agreement that we make with the Afghan Government.

Chairman LEVIN. Not only would it be dependent on that authority, but my point is that whatever number we have could only be committed if we have a bilateral security agreement. We need a bilateral security agreement before troops are actually left there after 2014, is that correct?

General DUNFORD. That is exactly right.

Chairman LEVIN. So that whatever number, whether it is 8,000, 10,000, 12,000, 6,000, or 14,000, whatever the number is is our share of the total number of troops there. That would only be ac-

complished if, in fact, there is a bilateral security agreement between our two countries.

General DUNFORD. That is correct, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Okay. Again, we all thank you very much for your service. You have really done a superb job there following a superb number of commanders that have preceded you. And you are carrying out a very, very impressive tradition, and we commend you for it. We thank you for it and those who work with you.

General DUNFORD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. We will stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:07 p.m., the committee adjourned.]