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STATEMENT OF

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BEFORE THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE ON DEFENSE

AN ASSESSMENT OF SECURITY AND STABILITY IN AFGHANISTAN

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**Opening statement of Lt. Gen Karl Eikenberry  
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**(As prepared for delivery)**

Chairman Skelton, Congressman Hunter, members of the Committee.

Having just departed from Command of Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan, my second tour of duty in Afghanistan, it's an honor to provide the Committee an update on the mission there, and to represent the 27,000 American Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen Marines, and civilians who are performing brilliantly in Afghanistan day in and day out. Commanding Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan was high privilege for me, and I can honestly say that my 21 months of command were the most rewarding tour during my 33 years of service. Headquarters, Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan was recently inactivated, as part of the reorganization of US headquarters, in light of NATO assuming theater-level operational control across Afghanistan.

My update today will include a broad discussion of campaign progress to date, a current threat assessment and an outline of four major areas that I believe are essential for campaign success.

When the United States and its Coalition partners began Operation Enduring Freedom in October 2001, we entered a broken country suffering from nearly 30 years of strife, with infrastructure destroyed and human capital devastated, riven by factionalism, with no economic viability. Our mission was twofold: First, defeat Al-Qaeda and their Taliban militant extremist allies; and second, together with the Afghan people and the international community, help create the conditions where international terrorism could never again find witting support and sanctuary.

Progress in Afghanistan, when viewed in the broader perspective, is an inspiring story ... even if individual snapshots can bring discouragement. Indeed, viewed from the baseline of October 2001, the progress made to date is truly significant: a moderate Constitution, a democratically-elected president, a sitting Parliament, a confirmed Cabinet, Afghan National Security Forces that are steadily growing in strength and capability, a dramatic increase and expansion of key social services, and ongoing reconstruction projects across the country that are improving the lives of the Afghan people. For example, since 2002, 622 schools have been constructed or refurbished and across Afghanistan there are over 5.3 million school-age children

enrolled in schools, a five-fold increase from 2001, and girls account for more than 34% of school attendees. Furthermore, 632 clinics or health facilities have been constructed or refurbished, and 82% of Afghans now have access to health care, up from just 8% in 2001, with 7.3 million children having been vaccinated against polio. Economically, whereas the Gross Domestic Product in 2002 was estimated at \$4.08 B, it is now estimated at an impressive \$8.9 B. I would also note that this growth represents a significantly higher rate of increase of the licit economy over the illicit (poppy) economy.

Against this progress, we continue to face major challenges, some of which we did not predict in late 2001 and 2002, such as a reconstituted enemy, the slow growth of governance capacity, and the cancerous effects of the narco-economy. Today, Afghanistan remains the target of a determined insurgency, drug traffickers and a hardened criminal element. Not all violence can be attributed to the Taliban or al-Qaeda, as narco-trafficking, tribal conflicts and land disputes also add to the overall security challenge. But the most significant near-term threat to campaign success is the insurgency focused in southern Afghanistan, directed by the former-Taliban regime leadership that has reconstituted itself. Tough and near-continuous combat operations over the course of the summer and fall of 2006

throughout southern Afghanistan by US and non-US NATO forces, partnered with Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), defeated Taliban forces on the battlefield. However, remote areas currently out of reach of the Afghan government and international reconstruction activities remain vulnerable to enemy influence and control.

The long-term threat to campaign success, though, is the potential irretrievable loss of legitimacy of the Government of Afghanistan. If the Afghan Government is unable to counter popular frustration with the lack of progress in reform and national development, the Afghan people may lose confidence in the nature of their political system. The accumulated effects of violent terrorist insurgent attacks, corruption, insufficient social resources and growing income disparities, all overlaid by a major international presence, are taking their toll on Afghan Government legitimacy. A point could be reached at which the Government of Afghanistan becomes irrelevant to its people, and the goal of establishing a democratic, moderate, self-sustaining state could be forever lost. Our center of gravity in this campaign is not the people of Afghanistan--it is the Government of Afghanistan; we need with more urgency to build Afghan government capacity and help connect it with the Afghan people. The key question is: "Is the Government of Afghanistan

winning?" In several critical areas--corruption, justice and law enforcement, and counter-narcotics--it is not. Moreover, to the extent that the government is not seen as winning, both regional and internal actors will adopt hedging strategies that will, in turn, further weaken the state.

To overcome these threats and achieve campaign success, there are four major areas which I will outline: NATO command, the transition to Afghan leadership, the need for non-military means, and the regional nature of terrorism and insecurity.

First, since I last appeared before this Committee, the Afghanistan mission has undergone a number of significant evolutions. Most important of those was the 5 October assumption of command by NATO's International Security Assistance Force, (or NATO-ISAF), of the Afghanistan-wide international military mission. The smooth, effective transition from a US-led Coalition to a NATO-led alliance was a hallmark success of 2006, and was due to the extraordinary teamwork displayed between the Afghan Ministry of Defense, NATO-ISAF, and the US-led Coalition.

The US provides the majority of combat forces and critical military capabilities to NATO-ISAF in Afghanistan, while the US

military continues its leading role in executing the missions of counterterrorism, the training & equipping of the Afghan National Security Forces, and support for the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan through the Army Corps of Engineers.

By any measure, NATO and NATO-ISAF have achieved much since August, 2003 when the Alliance undertook the limited ISAF mission confined at the time to the greater Kabul area. The Afghanistan operation has now grown into what is clearly the most ambitious in the Alliance's 57-year-old history, marking its first ever deployment outside European borders. Militarily, NATO-ISAF, currently comprised of some 36,000 personnel from 37 nations (26 NATO members and 11 other partner nations), has demonstrated capable nation-wide command & control, conducted effective offensive counter-insurgency operations, and proven supportive of US military counter-terrorist operations.

Moreover, NATO's presence has significantly complicated the task of Al Qaeda and Taliban militant extremist propagandists. Their enemy is no longer simply the US; the war must now be waged against a powerful international military alliance operating under a UN mandate.

Since NATO-ISAF assumed responsibility for all counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan this past October, it has conducted

operations which focused on objectives that ranged from protection of Non-Governmental Organizations employed in reconstruction work, to offensive disruption of insurgent safe havens, to maintaining freedom of movement on the pan-Afghanistan Ring Road, to promoting governance and development.

At the same time, NATO must fulfill its commitments to provide sufficient forces and capabilities to the mission, must increase its level of support to the training & equipping of the Afghan National Army and Police, and must eliminate operational restrictions, or so-called caveats, that some nations have placed on units that they have deployed to Afghanistan.

With regard to NATO's future, the long view of the Afghanistan campaign is that it is a means to continue the transformation of the Alliance. Some say that failure in Afghanistan could "break" the Alliance. The converse is also true; success in Afghanistan could "make" the Alliance, with real military transformation being driven by NATO's experiences fighting a difficult counterinsurgency. The Afghanistan campaign could mark the beginning of sustained NATO efforts to overhaul Alliance operational practices in every domain: command & control, doctrine, force generation, intelligence, and logistics. Indeed, the US can facilitate selected Allied

nations' military modernization using Afghanistan deployments as the readiness goal.

The second major area essential to campaign success is the transition to Afghan leadership. While important in every domain, I will concentrate on our US military task of developing the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). The Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP), along with the National Directorate of Security (a rough equivalent of a combined FBI and CIA), are all steadily gaining strength and have achieved impressive levels of vertical & horizontal integration under Coalition mentorship. Today, over 32,000 Army and 62,000 police are trained, equipped and engaged in security operations. The ANSF, partnered with NATO and Coalition units, are expanding their reach and presence throughout Afghanistan. They are increasingly playing a major role in ensuring the stability of their nation, as evidenced by their successful participation in every NATO and Coalition operation this past year.

We have established in concert with our Afghan partners an effective and quality training base for their Army. For instance, we are now expanding Basic Training class sizes to over 2,000 soldiers per cycle. Afghans are finding pride in

serving in the ANA. Afghan units are directly in the fight, bravely serving side by side with NATO-ISAF forces. We see continuous evidence that unit combat skills are improving, and they are developing competent and confident leaders. Most importantly, individual and unit pride and esprit de corps are growing. Special programs such as the training & equipping of a Commando force are receiving international support and will greatly add to the overall capability of the Army.

The ANP includes Uniformed and Auxiliary Police, Civil Order Police, Border Police, and Counter-Narcotics Police. Reform of the Ministry of Interior and its police force is underway. Recent positive steps include President Karzai replacing 40 provincial police chiefs and other senior officials. In addition, overall pay and rank reform are progressing and on track. Police operations are improving and partnership opportunities with US Military Police units and Special Forces are being developed.

It is imperative that the international community maintain its support and commitment to the building of this essential institution of the Afghan State--the ANSF. As mentioned earlier, there are equipment requirements for the ANA and ANP

and requirements for training teams that NATO and the international community need to address.

The third major area essential to campaign success is the provision of sufficient non-military means. While we have enjoyed success with the assumption of the Afghanistan mission by NATO and in the development of ANSF, Afghanistan's continued development will depend on simultaneously increasing emphasis by the Government of Afghanistan and international community on the non-military aspects of our mission. These non-military efforts are the heart of our long-term effort to make Afghanistan a viable, self-sustaining member of the international community free from international terror. In short, we must rebuild Afghanistan's "Middle Ground"--that is, its civil society, ravaged by three decades of warfare, extremism, and terrorism. Throughout Afghanistan's 34 provinces, rebuilding the "Middle Ground" remains the primary concern of the Afghan people. According to a recent survey, almost 90% of the Afghan people consider reconstruction and economic development the most important requirement to improve their quality of life. We have enjoyed some important success in building that Middle Ground. But in the areas of governance, justice, counter-narcotics and economic development, the International Community must provide more resources. These efforts must include increased capital

investment, technical and functional experts in relevant areas, and sufficient numbers of managers capable of planning and executing resource-intensive, multi-year programs. This is not to say that excellent efforts have not been made in all of the above areas; the fact is, that the scale of problems are more immense than originally assessed and program implementation in Afghanistan is extremely difficult work.

For example, reconstruction efforts to date in Afghanistan have been nothing short of remarkable, but daunting challenges remain. In a campaign such as this, the construction of roads and infrastructure can be just as decisive as military actions. The US Army Corps of Engineers' Afghanistan Engineering District (AED) has partnered with USAID and our Provincial Reconstruction Teams by executing \$55M worth of roads and infrastructure in 2006. In 2007, AED will execute nearly one-billion USD worth of projects ranging from the construction of hundreds of facilities for the ANA and ANP, to providing hundreds of kilometers of new roads. Yet to truly expand the reach of the central government, thousands of kilometers of more roads are needed.

Importantly, the Government of Afghanistan today maintains broad popular support, and political discourse is guided by constitutional processes--not by the rule of gun. In addition,

pledges for international support for Afghanistan are significant. At the London Conference in January 2006, 64 nations pledged over ten-billion USD over the next five years to Afghanistan's reconstruction & development. With additional US contributions to the ANSF and economic development expected in early 2007, the totals will be even more impressive.

Underpinned by what is assumed to be NATO's multi-year commitment to Afghanistan's security, the Afghan Government, partnered with the international community, has the clear potential to achieve victory. However, increased US and international resources must be urgently applied to those critical areas that in the long-term threaten our campaign center of gravity--the Government of Afghanistan.

The fourth and final area essential to campaign success is understanding and effectively dealing with the regional nature of terrorism and insecurity. The fact that terrorism is not bound by borders drives us to examine the region surrounding Afghanistan as we work to eliminate a common threat. We cannot win this fight in Afghanistan alone. There are common interests in the region that we can use to leverage cooperation; for instance, the growing narcotics trafficking industry threatens the populations of all Afghanistan's neighbors as well as Eurasian and European nations, and will require the cooperation

of all affected countries to counter. Economic development in the region will be key to thwarting the insurgency, as much of the enemy force is drawn from the ranks of unemployed men looking for wages to support their families.

Pakistan faces similar internal challenges, including militant extremism that grows in ungoverned space. Pakistan is working hard to address the growing threat of Talibanization within its own borders, as well as contributing extensively to the global war on terror. Pakistan's military and security forces have taken significant casualties against the same enemy that we in Afghanistan face.

As we work toward improving governance, economic development and security in Afghanistan, we must maintain and strengthen cooperative relationships with Pakistan. Continuing to build a closer and friendlier Afghan-Pakistani bilateral relationship will bring benefits across a broad spectrum encompassing governance, economics and security. Helping Pakistan and Afghanistan find political solutions to their problems will help us reach success in our own campaign.

However, I do emphasize that Al Qaeda and Taliban leadership presence inside Pakistan remains a significant problem that must

be satisfactorily addressed if we are to prevail in Afghanistan and if we are to defeat the global threat posed by international terrorism.

In closing, allow me to emphasize that we are now at a critical point where a strategic investment in capabilities is needed to accelerate the progress toward the desired goal of helping establish a moderate, stable, and representative Government of Afghanistan. The shield behind which the institutions of the Afghan state are developing, a shield now provided by our NATO forces, can eventually be provided by the Afghan National Army and Police. However, this requires significant resources, commitment, and patience. In particular, NATO and the International Community must now also make greater long-term military and non-military investments to ensure success.

We are carrying out the extraordinarily difficult tasks of trying to build a values-based Afghan National Army and National Police Force while simultaneously fighting a war. The FY07 Supplemental investment proposed by the Administration would permit the Afghan Army to continue to expand to the Bonn-agreed level of 70,000, and enable the Afghan National Police to increase to 82,000 by the end of calendar year 2008. That Supplemental appropriation will also equip the Afghan National

Army and Police with the protection, firepower, weapons, enhanced training and mobility to meet the insurgency threat. As the ANSF grows in capacity and capability, we can accelerate the defeat of the insurgency and extend the government's influence across the country. With the Afghan National Army on a solid path toward independent operations, the ANP force is now our leading priority.

In addition, the Administration's FY07 supplemental request also would permit a significant increase in spending for roads, power, and a level of economic development, especially in those areas most affected by the ongoing insurgency. I believe this request, if approved, will effectively address important aspects of the non-military means required for success that I addressed earlier.

The leadership of Afghanistan is committed to being an active partner in the Global War on Terror for the long-term. The Afghan people and their nation's leaders are worth our investment, and it is in the US national interest to gain and keep a partner and a friend we can count on in this critical region of the world. US, NATO-ISAF and Afghan forces are serving brilliantly under the most challenging and hostile conditions, from the extreme cold and high altitudes of the

Hindu Kush to the unforgiving heat of the red desert in summer. But, if we fail to see this mission through with the international community, Afghanistan will again become an open breeding ground and sanctuary for international terrorism from which terrorists will reconstitute and follow us to our homeland to strike us again.

Please accept my deepest thanks for your continued support of our great Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors, Marines and civilians who are ensuring our security 8,000 miles from here. Their sacrifices, and those of their families, continue to enable the Government of Afghanistan to pursue its goal of a secure, free and stable nation. It was a privilege and honor to serve with them. I look forward to your questions.