

**Congressional Testimony  
U.S. Presence Post 2014  
Afghanistan**

**House Armed Services Committee  
2118 Rayburn House Office Building**

**by**

**John M. Keane  
General  
US Army, Retired**

**19 September 2013**

**1000 hours**

**Congressional Hearing  
Testimony  
19 September 2012  
1000 hrs**

Mr. Chairman, ranking minority, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today on such a critical subject as the “presence in Afghanistan post 2014”. Am honored to be with such a distinguished panel who I have known for many years. Given there are four oral statements, I will keep my remarks very brief.

Afghanistan is rapidly moving toward its most critical milestone since 2001, when the Taliban were deposed, as 2014 approaches and Afghanistan participates in a political, economic and security transition. It is US and Afghanistan written policy that both countries will maintain a long term strategic relationship which is mutually beneficial. I am reminded we had a similar agreement with Iraq, titled the Strategic Framework Agreement, which we have not honored, indeed, we have pulled away from Iraq allowing Iran to gain influence and encouraging the Al Qaeda to reassert itself.

The United States cannot make this mistake again in Afghanistan, not only is U.S. military presence required but a determined, aggressive, diplomatic and political engagement is needed for years to come. It took multiple generations after the Korean War for South Korea to transition from a 3<sup>rd</sup> world nation run by military dictators to the world's 12<sup>th</sup> largest economy and a flourishing democracy. U.S. and international community presence in Afghanistan is vital to its future success and for overall stability in the region.

After 2014, there will have been national elections in Afghanistan. While there are no guarantees, a relatively fair and open election that reflects the peoples' choices and results in an improved national government will be a significant step forward in the political development of Afghanistan. As such, it will positively impact the confidence of the Afghan people and the international community at large in the Afghan political process. On the contrary, if the election is perceived to be corrupt and unfair it will be a major setback which will adversely impact US and IC support.

As part of the post 2014 presence the US and the IC should assist the Afghans to move from a "donor" economy with outside sources representing

the bulk of the resources to a self-sustaining economy focusing on mining, agriculture and transportation. I will defer economic engagement to my fellow panel member Clare Lockhart, who is a recognized expert in the area.

The central issue facing Afghanistan post 2014 is how to manage the security risk. How do we avoid squandering the gains we have made in Afghanistan security. Only if the security situation is stable, and the Taliban know they cannot win, can there ever be a realistic hope for a political settlement.

Three key decisions post 2014 can mitigate the security risk and provide a hedge:

## **1. FUNDING AFGHANISTAN NATIONAL SECURITY FORCES (ANSF) POST 2014**

Currently the transition from US/NATO leading combat operations to supporting the lead of the ANSF in combat operations, frankly, is going better than most expected. The growth and development of the ANSF into an acceptable force which has the respect of the Afghan people is quite an achievement. While it is still too early to tell how they will do entirely on their own, the preliminary indications are positive. Currently, the ANSF is at

a force level of 352 thousand which is funded through 2015. Options are under consideration to drawdown the ANSF post 2015. To drawdown the ANSF on the heels of the US/NATO drawdown makes no sense and drives up the risk. We can mitigate the risk by planning to fund the ANSF at the current 352 thousand to 2020. At some point the Afghans will be in a position to contribute to the funding level.

## **2. POST 2014 RESIDUAL FORCE**

The size of the residual force should be driven by the missions that are required for the force. Those missions are counter-terrorism (CT), training and assistance and enablers to the ANSF.

--CT focus is on the Taliban leaders to disrupt their ability to plan, support and lead combat operations. While leaders can be replaced, successful CT operations are very disruptive to the Taliban and definitely adversely impact their operations. Successful CT operations not only require a direct action force but also drone crews, analysts, helicopter maintenance and flight crews, medical trauma units and security forces.

--Training and assistance are essentially advisors to assist the army and police with their continued growth and development. These advisors will be

mainly to operational headquarters and to the ministers of defense and interior.

--The enablers for the ANSF is often misunderstood as to its importance. Just about every NATO country in Afghanistan requires enablers from the US in varying degrees, such as helicopters, intelligence, medical, logistics and road and mine clearance. When the ANA was organized, recruited and trained the decision was to build an infantry force, or a “boots on the ground” force. The enablers would be provided by the US and are similar to what the US provides NATO forces. Eventually, the ANA will have its own enablers but not till years beyond 2014. If the ANA is to be offensive minded they must have confidence in their support, otherwise they will be paralyzed and reduced to defending their bases.

A summary of the force level requirements for the residual force are:

CT – 7,000

Advisors / Trainers– 5,000

Enablers – 8,000

Total – 20,000

### **3. PAKISTAN SANCTUARIES**

--A third key decision to reduce the risk is to authorize the targeting of the Taliban and Haggani leaders in the sanctuaries in Pakistan. Priority is to the Haggani sanctuary because the security situation in the EAST is not as stable as the SOUTH. This would be an extension of the mission the OGA is conducting against the Al Qaeda in the FATA. Once systematic targeting commences, the sanctuary will cease to exist as we currently know it; a place where strategy, training, operational oversight, intelligence and logistics is executed, routinely, in safe haven. These functions will suffer significantly which will positively impact operations in the EAST. Additionally, it will be a huge morale boost for the ANSF.

Let me conclude by saying that if we are to avoid squandering the gains we have made in Afghanistan, US/IC presence post 2014 is essential. The Taliban are hoping to regain the momentum post 2014 and will make a major effort to do so. What is key is the US policy commitment to the stability and security of Afghanistan must be clearly stated time and again and moreover reflected in the political, economic and military assistance that is critical to reduce the risk of failure. We cannot afford any equivocation or mixed

signals about the strength and resolve of the US commitment to Afghanistan's future.

Thank you and I welcome your questions.