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**Statement for HASC Oversight & Investigations Subcommittee Hearing on
“Assessing the Development of Afghan National Security Forces”**

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Chairman Hartzler, Ranking Member Speier, and other distinguished members of this subcommittee, I am grateful for the opportunity to be here and provide you with information regarding the current status of the development of the Afghanistan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF). Before I provide you with an update, I'd like to thank the committee for your support of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and civilians. Our military operations in Afghanistan - over the past 14 plus years – have helped to ensure that there has not been another major attack against the U.S. homeland since September 11, 2001. Yet this effort has also highlighted the profound cost of war - a cost that has been paid by the 2,235 men and women in uniform that have died in Afghanistan and additional 20,115 wounded defending the freedoms we all enjoy.

Our primary objective in Afghanistan is to ensure that another terrorist attack-originating from Afghanistan and directed against the U.S. homeland-will never happen again. The United States and the international community have a continuing core interest in strengthening Afghanistan's ability to secure its territory and deny safe-haven for terrorist and violent extremist organizations.

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We have a partner in the Afghan unity government that recognizes these threats as their responsibility to address but they continue to need our help.

Our counterterrorism mission and the train, advise, and assist (TAA) mission focused on building a sustainable Afghan security force are mutually reinforcing efforts integral to achieving U.S. counterterrorism goals and overall mission success. As part of the TAA mission, our special operations forces continue to help develop the Afghan Special Security Forces. In addition, U.S. Counterterrorism operations are conducted primarily in partnership with Afghan Special Security Force units to address shared counterterrorism objectives, as demonstrated by the partnered raid in October 2015 on the al Qaeda training camp in Kandahar Province. The U.S. military mission in Afghanistan is a vitally important part of our national effort to protect our homeland from terrorist threats, and to enable a sustainable Afghan capacity to secure their own country.

Fighting Season Update

The Commander of U.S. Forces - Afghanistan (USFOR-A), General Campbell, has described the performance of the ANDSF during the 2015 fighting season as uneven and inconsistent. The ANDSF control all of the major population centers, lines of communication, and areas required for governance, where the Taliban have influence and freedom of movement of in some rural areas. The ANDSF have demonstrated resilience and progress during this difficult, extended fighting season. Their steadfast willingness to stand and fight insurgent forces is admirable, as is their continued development into a more modern military. The ANDSF have taken the operational burden for all security operations during the last fighting season, with a greatly

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reduced U.S. and coalition footprint and resources. They significantly increased their operational tempo during the last fighting season, almost double from the previous year, which resulted in increased ANDSF casualties and overall attrition. But equally as important, it also led to even greater insurgent casualties.

Through this harsh and extended fighting season, the Afghan government and the ANDSF have struggled and have had uneven performance but I believe they are learning the lessons necessary to do better in the coming years.

One example of a tough lesson learned can be seen in the fighting that took place in Kunduz, which was heavily reported in the news. The fall of Kunduz - although only temporary - identifies several shortcomings in the ANDSF that include poor integration of intelligence, lack of cross-organization coordination, and poor force optimization. Although these events led to a brief insurgent information operations victory, they also revealed the Taliban's incapacity to hold terrain. Ultimately, the ANDSF were able to take back the territory within several days.

In contrast, in August 2015, the ANDSF demonstrated increased capacity in its conduct of Operation Iron Triangle. This joint, multicorps operation in Nangarhar province involved elements of the 201st and 203rd Corps, the 111th Capital Division, the Afghan Uniform Police, Afghan Local Police, Afghan Air Force, and Afghanistan Special Security Forces, among others. Positive aspects of this operation included effective shaping operations by Afghanistan Special Security Forces in advance of the main effort, the solid tactical performance of ANDSF units, the effective use of their own armed MD-530 helicopters as a close air support platform, and the

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successful conduct of meetings with local Afghan villagers by elements of the 201st Corps in order to generate local support and recruit Afghan Local Police members to assist in holding cleared areas in the wake of the operation.

The Afghan Special Security Forces represent some of the most elite and brave fighting forces in the ANDSF and in the region. They continue to demonstrate their ability to conduct independent operations throughout Afghanistan and, when engaged, win decisively. Nearly all battalion-sized Special Operations Kandaks are conducting independent company-level operations, and several Special Operations Kandaks have conducted unilateral missions driven by Afghan intelligence gathered without the assistance of U.S. or coalition special operations forces.

We recommend that the ANDSF maintain its current authorized end strength of approximately 352,000 personnel, with an additional authorized 30,000 Afghan Local Police, for the immediate future in order to maintain a stable environment. Monthly attrition rates of approximately 2 percent are indications of poor leadership, training cycles (effects on training tempo, leave, and rest), quality of life (soldiers' comfort, entitlements, leave, facilities, and personal equipment), and welfare (activities, recreation, leave transportation issues, education, self-improvement, and cohesiveness). The ANDSF are focused on decreasing attrition by strengthening recruitment efforts; increasing leadership skills through the development of professional military education; establishing re-contracting rate goals for corps commanders; and updating policies for absences, incentive pays, promotions, and leave.

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During 2015, the ANDSF demonstrated increased capabilities in intelligence, aviation, sustainment, and special operations; however, they still also struggle and have gaps in these same areas. Despite these challenges, the Afghan government and its security ministries repeatedly marshaled the necessary resources and political will to respond effectively to insurgent offensives and retake key territory overrun by the Taliban.

ANDSF Development

Significant long term capability gaps remain in the areas of ANDSF leadership, rotary-wing aviation, combined arms operations, intelligence collection and dissemination, close air support capability, and maintenance. Our TAA efforts will remain focused on these areas to enable the ANDSF to become increasingly self-sufficient, professional, and effective. While working to improve performance throughout Afghan security ministries, U.S. and coalition advisors focus their efforts on building a self-sustainable, effective, affordable, and credible ANDSF that is capable of maintaining security in Afghanistan under responsible and efficient Afghan security ministries. These efforts are focused at the ministry and corps level for the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police and at the tactical level with the Afghan Special Security Forces and the Afghan Air Force.

The NATO-led Resolute Support mission focuses on developing eight essential functions and associated sub-functions in order to develop capable and sustainable Afghan security ministries and forces. These critical functions include: planning, programming, budgeting, and execution; transparency, accountability, and oversight; civilian governance of the Afghan security

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institutions and adherence to rule of law; force generation; sustainment of the force; planning, resourcing, and execution of effective security campaigns; the development of intelligence capabilities and processes; and strategic communication capability.

Briefly, I would like to highlight some success and continued areas of weakness within the ANDSF and what we believe is the way ahead: In budget and execution, for the first time, the Ministries of Defense and Interior, the coalition, and the international donor community participated in an integrated Afghan fiscal year program and budget development process. As part of this process, the team conducted a thorough current year budget execution review to assess resource optimization and prioritize next year's needs. This resulted in successfully creating a prioritized list of requirements and critical funding realignments to higher priority Ministries of Defense efforts within the next fiscal year. Challenges remain in their ability to execute on-budget international community funds, due in large part to the overhaul of the procurement system. U.S. and coalition forces will continue to mentor and assist our Afghan partners to develop well-informed and executable financial plans conduct budget program workshops to increase budgeting capability.

The current ANDSF personnel and pay systems are manually tracked, stove-piped, manpower-intensive systems prone to human error and corruption at many points. We have helped them begin to implement an Afghan Personnel and Pay System that will increase accountability and reduce the opportunity for corruption. We anticipate that ANDSF payroll and personnel records will be centrally managed and auditable at the ministerial level by June 2017. Additionally, pay and personnel records will be consolidated in an electronic database to make them much more

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manageable, auditable, and accurate. A biometrically matched identification card will ensure only those who are supposed to be paid are entered in the system and "ghost" personnel are removed and not paid. Payroll for some ANDSF is now generated through electronic funds transfer to each individual's bank account and a notification will be sent to their mobile phone or email to ensure they understand how much they are paid and what was deducted.

In the area of sustainment, the coalition advisors are assisting the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior to build capability to sustain force structure with procurement, warehousing, materiel management, asset visibility, and transportation. Across both security ministries, the value of understanding and training personnel to track and maintain accountability of repair parts is taking hold. Managing and maintaining key systems such as communication devices, the Mobile Strike Force Vehicle, the D-30 artillery howitzer, and small arms have seen marked improvement.

Lastly, in anti-corruption reform, the security ministries have several efforts underway to identify and mitigate opportunities for corruption. A formal Ministerial Internal Control Program is being implemented to improve efficiency and effectiveness through detailed assessments to prevent fraud, waste and abuse.

ANDSF Cost and Cost Drivers

The total annual cost of the ANDSF at an authorized force level of 195,000 Afghan National Army and 157,000 Afghan National Police personnel, plus 30,000 Afghan Local Police has been

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steadily decreasing over time. This occurred, in part, due to the transition from the initial fielding of major equipment and a substantial investment in infrastructure construction to a more sustainment-focused steady-state. Additionally, over the past year, the United States, the Afghan government, and international partners have worked together to further reduce ANDSF costs through the use of funding conditionality, divestiture of excess facilities, and a limited transition to Afghan-led "on-budget" contracting. While modest in scale, these efforts have decreased the total cost of ANDSF without diminishing its effectiveness in a challenging security environment.

The ANDSF budget has two major cost drivers: personnel sustainment (primarily salaries) and non-personnel sustainment, which includes expenses such as fuel or equipment maintenance and repair. A third significant cost driver, sustainment of Afghan Air Force assets, is a subset of Afghan National Army non-personnel sustainment. Addressing these cost drivers, as well as evaluating ANDSF platform and program costs at the end of the 2016 fighting season, will be critical to identifying other opportunities to reduce the total cost of the ANDSF without reductions to force size that might otherwise diminish ANDSF effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

The President's announcement in October 2015 to keep 9,800 troops in Afghanistan through most of 2016 and to retain 5,500 troops in 2017 signals the continued U.S. commitment to Afghanistan and supports our military efforts towards the national security interests we have in the region. This decision reflects the best military advice of our senior commanders, and

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reinforces our commitment to regional stability. The international coalition continues to support Afghanistan and welcomes our continued commitment.

Thank you for your continued support of our military and our families. I look forward to your questions.