

**Congressional Testimony
After the Withdrawal: The Way
Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan**

**Joint Subcommittee House Foreign Affairs
2170 Rayburn House Office Building**

by

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

29 October 2013

1415 hours

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Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, ranking minority Ted Deutch, and distinguished members of the joint subcommittee, thank you for allowing me to testify today on such a critical subject as the “way forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan”. Am honored to be with such a distinguished panel who I have known for many years.

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 3rd world nation run by military dictators to the world's 12th 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.

In 2014, there will be 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 fundamentally 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. Despite all of Afghanistan's current economic woes it does have the real opportunity to dramatically increase the quality of life of the Afghan people.

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 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.

Based on the required missions the residual force size should be approximately 20, 000 U.S.

3. PAKISTAN SANCTUARIES

--US diplomatic policy has failed to reverse Pakistan’s support of the Afghan Taliban sanctuaries in Pakistan. The most serious impact is in the

EAST where the security situation is not as stable as the SOUTH. Indeed the Haggani network (HN) in Afghanistan dominates the most eastern provinces. US surge forces were withdrawn before they were able to be applied in the EAST and as such the ANSF faces a critical security risk, which can be reduced by authorizing the targeting of the HN, in its sanctuary in Pakistan. This would be an extension of the mission the OGA is conducting against the Al Qaeda (AQ) 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 and a huge morale boost for the ANSF.

U.S. RELATIONSHIP WITH PAKISTAN

Post 9/11 U.S. policy with Pakistan has produced mixed results. Pakistan has a history of profound strategic miscalculation. On the positive side, we have successfully impacted the PAK military to transition and train conventional forces for counter insurgency operations and while they have not defeated the Taliban insurgency they have made progress. U.S. and Pakistan have shared

intelligence on AQ and the PAK's have been instrumental in killing and capturing key AQ leaders. However, as mentioned, the PAK's have not withdrawn their support for the HN and the TB as they hedge against a potential US failure in Afghanistan. The way forward is to recognize there are common goals in regional stability, Pakistan internal security and Afghanistan stability and, yet, be cleared eyed about a Pakistan military that puts itself before the state, a weak and corrupt civilian government and an escalating nuclear power. The aid that the USG just resumed should be shifting some of the U.S. effort to assisting in the development of a stronger, less corrupt, civilian government capable of controlling its military. Additionally, the US must assist PAK leaders to address their real strategic issues and a national security strategy to sustain it without confrontation with its neighbors or the use of non-state actors as instruments of national policy.

CONCLUSION

Let me conclude by saying that war is fundamentally a test of wills and the ultimate objective of war is to break your opponents will. Some claim it is our will that is being broken, we are war weary, and, it is best to just leave because the Taliban will take over eventually, regardless of what we do. No

one knows what will be the long term future stability of Afghanistan but there are things we do know after almost 12 years of involvement:

- the AQ has largely been driven out of Afghanistan

- Afghanistan routinely, now elects its own local and national leaders

(not close to a mature democracy, but a beginning)

- education from primary through university is flourishing with woman at all levels

- despite an insurgency, quality of life has improved

- the potential for economic self-sustainment is on the horizon

- the ANSF in recent polling shows dramatic improvement in Afghan confidence

- security has dramatically improved, most of the country is relatively stable, the Taliban are largely defeated in the SOUTH and the ANSF is holding its own. In the EAST there is risk, and I addressed how to mitigate it. My point is, much has been accomplished and we should not squander these gains and risk the return of the TB and the AQ. US/IC presence post 2014 is essential. The required resources are dramatically less than what we provided in the past or are providing now. Is that future investment worth it to protect the positive results of our previous investment, my judgment is,

yes. Ryan Crocker our most esteemed Middle East Ambassador, in over a generation, who served in Pakistan, in Iraq and Afghanistan during the “surge” periods has said, “how we leave a country and what we leave behind is far more important than how we started.” 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.