

**Testimony of
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**House Armed Services Committee
Oversight & Investigations Subcommittee Hearing on “Assessing the
Development of Afghan National Security Forces”
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Chairwoman Hartzler, Ranking Member Speier, and Members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to discuss Department of Defense (DoD) efforts to develop the Afghanistan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF). I am honored to have the opportunity to update you alongside my colleagues Colonel Stephen Michael from the Joint Staff and Mr. Kent Breedlove from the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), as well as Mr. Michael Child, Sr., from the Office of the DoD Inspector General (DoD IG) and Mr. John Sopko, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR).

I also want to thank the members of this Subcommittee and other members of the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) for your steadfast support of our efforts in Afghanistan. All of the witnesses before you today take very seriously our responsibility to ensure our DoD personnel—military and civilian—as well as our diplomats and other U.S. Government personnel in Afghanistan, have the resources, authorities, and guidance they need to accomplish their mission. We are

forever grateful to and honor the more than 2,200 U.S. service members who lost their lives while serving in Afghanistan, the more than 20,100 military personnel who were wounded, and the thousands of families who have sacrificed for this important mission. Their efforts represent a strategically significant contribution to the security of our homeland.

Within DoD, my office is responsible to provide overall policy guidance for and oversight of the mission in Afghanistan, including DoD-funded security assistance for the ANDSF. We have daily contact with key personnel in theater at the Combined Security Transition Assistance Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A), which has primary responsibility for the execution of the DoD security assistance mission. We also work closely with the Joint Staff, U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), DIA and others in the intelligence community, and the Department of State as we continually assess the status of our efforts in Afghanistan. My office also supports the efforts of the Office of the Lead Inspector General (IG) for Afghanistan – the DoD IG – and those of the Office of the SIGAR, ensuring they have the information and appropriate context required to fulfill their respective statutory mandates to conduct audits and investigations of our security assistance efforts and other oversight issues.

Today, I will discuss the policy framework in which DoD conducts the overall mission in Afghanistan, provide a brief assessment of the ANDSF, and

discuss key aspects of the execution of DoD's security assistance mission. In doing so, I will also describe our dedication to accountability and transparency in how we spend U.S. taxpayer dollars in support of the ANDSF.

As you are aware, our priority in Afghanistan remains to prevent it from once again becoming a safe haven from which terrorists can plan attacks against the U.S. homeland, U.S. interests abroad, and our international partners. In pursuit of this objective, DoD is conducting two complementary missions in Afghanistan: a counterterrorism mission against the remnants of al Qaeda and other extremist groups that threaten the United States – such as the Islamic State in Khorasan Province (IS-KP) – and a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-led train, advise, and assist mission with the ANDSF, known as Resolute Support.

In October 2015, following a comprehensive review of the mission and the opportunity for its continued progress, President Obama announced that, rather than continuing to draw down to a Kabul-only U.S. military footprint in 2017, the U.S. military would instead retain up to 9,800 personnel in Afghanistan throughout most of 2016, eventually drawing down to a steady-state presence of up to 5,500 personnel by January 1, 2017. This presence will be based not only in Kabul, but also other locations, including Bagram Airbase and in Jalalabad and Kandahar. This decision provides U.S. forces with sufficient capabilities to continue the development of Afghan ministerial capacity, along with key ANDSF capabilities in

the critical areas of aviation, intelligence, special operations, logistics, and maintenance. This presence also enables a robust platform that will allow the United States both to pursue counterterrorism targets and to assist the ANDSF in further developing their special operations capability, which has proved increasingly critical to U.S counterterrorism and broader security interests.

The financial support of the United States and the international community is critical to sustaining the ANDSF. Over the last decade, congressional appropriations for the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund (ASFF) have enabled the development of Afghan security forces who are capable of assuming full responsibility for the security of Afghanistan, which in turn allowed U.S. and coalition partners to end the combat mission at the end of 2014. NATO Allies and operational partners have also contributed to the development of the ANDSF through multi-lateral trust funds. During the last week of January, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan (USFOR-A) Commander General John Campbell, Ambassador Richard Olson, other Department of State and USFOR-A representatives, and I briefed NATO Allies and operational partners in Brussels on anticipated ANDSF requirements through 2020. I am encouraged that international donors recognize the significance of their continued support for the financial sustainment of the ANDSF.

This is particularly critical because the ability of the ANDSF to provide security for their country enables our broader counterterrorism objectives for the region. The difficult human and geographic terrain along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border provides opportunities for extremists to exploit limited government capacity and sympathetic networks to maintain a presence in the region. As a result, the border region remains an extremist safe-haven for various elements of al Qaeda, the Afghan Taliban, the Haqqani Network, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, the Islamic State-Khorasan Province, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, and other extremist groups. Given this environment, the United States' ability to monitor and address threats that could emerge from this region is critical to our national security. We remain committed to doing so in partnership with a still developing ANDSF that is working to secure Afghanistan from both internal and external threats.

In particular, our support is focused on ensuring that the ANDSF are able to counter and degrade the Taliban to force the Taliban to choose between continuing to fight a war it cannot win or joining Afghan-led negotiations about what voice it will have in Afghanistan's future. Even as the ANDSF take on the significant challenge of a robust counterinsurgency mission against the Taliban, we recognize they do so in a dynamic threat environment that requires a strong partnership with the United States and coalition presence. Our efforts to assist the ANDSF in their

combat mission against the Taliban and to continue to develop their capabilities are a prudent investment in both regional and international security.

Indeed, for more than a year, the mission of providing security for all of Afghanistan has been the sole responsibility of the Afghan government. Yet the security situation remains fragile in Afghanistan, as the ANDSF seek to improve their capacity while facing a continuing threat from extremist networks. Afghan forces will continue to require U.S. and coalition assistance for many years. The Afghan government is determined to remain a close partner with the United States and our allies and partners to prevent the re-emergence of terrorist safe havens in Afghanistan and threats to the survival of the Afghan government. This partnership is key to avoiding new commitments of large U.S. and coalition ground forces.

During this first year after the coalition's combat mission concluded, the ANDSF faced a number of difficult tests, and the results have been mixed. We are working with the ANDSF to make adjustments and to continue to help to develop their capabilities – an effort further enabled by the President's October decision. So as not to overlook the successes we witnessed this past year, I want to echo some of the key points General Campbell made in his testimony to the full House Armed Services Committee on February 2, 2016, and focus on some key areas of ANDSF development. As General Campbell noted in his testimony, over the last

eight years, the ANDSF have made remarkable advancements and are developing into a modern security force with many of the systems and processes of an advanced military. They have demonstrated the ability to conduct successfully effective, large-scale, multi-pillar clearing operations across the country and, when the insurgents attempted strategic advances in areas such as in Kunduz City, Ghazni, and elsewhere, the ANDSF proved able to rally and re-capture those areas.

In the midst of fighting a war, the ANDSF and the Afghan security ministries continue, with coalition assistance, to develop their capacity to manage complex tasks such as budgeting, force generation, personnel management, national-level maintenance, logistics, and procurement, and to address key capability gaps in aviation and intelligence, while continuing to enhance their already very capable special security forces. These efforts will remain the focus of our enduring DoD mission in Afghanistan, and we anticipate needing up to 5,500 U.S. military personnel in 2017 to support these activities.

As we work together to close key capability gaps, a key challenge will be ensuring the ANDSF are not only effective, but also are affordable and sustainable. In this regard, we realize that U.S. taxpayers have been generous and patient with the ANDSF's development and that it is our responsibility to review carefully how best – and most efficiently – we can assist our Afghan partners. Finding the right balance between effectiveness and affordability is a key focus for the Department,

which I will illustrate by outlining our efforts in a few areas that represent the major cost drivers of the ANDSF. In some of these areas, the work of the DoD IG and SIGAR has helpfully informed our effort to protect taxpayers' money and to ensure we can achieve our goals for developing the ANDSF.

The first is our on-going efforts to develop the ANDSF's aviation capabilities, including by addressing their close air support needs as well as long-term lift requirements. This is a very complex undertaking and represents a significant portion of our investment in the ANDSF. The concerted effort to rebuild the Afghan Air Force – which began in 2007 – has faced a number of setbacks, including a delay in fielding the principal close-air platform – the fixed-wing A-29 Super Tucano. If our original plans had gone as expected, the A-29s would have been fielded beginning in 2013 before the U.S. combat mission ended, but procurement delays pushed the delivery and pilot training timeline. As a result, the first four A-29s were not fielded to Afghanistan until last month.

To mitigate the impact of these delays, we took important steps in 2014 to implement bridge solutions, including configuring a portion of the Mi-17 transportation fleet with weapons and delivering armed MD-530 helicopters in 2015 to help with the close air support capability. In 2016, with the fielding of 8 of a total of 20 A-29s and all 28 MD-530s, the Afghan aerial fires capability will nearly triple compared to 2015. The close air support gap is not the only ANDSF

aviation challenge; we also are assessing the sustainability of the Mi-17 fleet, which is operating at a higher tempo than expected as the fighting intensified this past year.

Ground forces equipment also has relatively high sustainment costs and is a continued focus of our efforts to balance effectiveness and affordability. We have fielded more than 15,000 up-armored High Mobility Multi-purpose Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWVs) to the ANDSF as well as tens of thousands of other types of vehicles. This fleet has seen a lot of combat, particularly in the last year, is beginning to age, and will require recapitalization. We have begun to procure replacements for some of the HMMWVs, and we, together with our Afghan counterparts, are reviewing long-term requirements as well as reset options that will result in a more affordable and predictable long-term plan for these mobility and combat requirements.

As is the case with DoD personnel accounts, Afghan Ministry of Defense (MoD) and Ministry of Interior (MoI) pay and personnel expenses are a major cost driver—about 20 percent of the roughly \$5 billion total cost for the Afghan security forces. DoD funds the majority of this cost for the Afghan government, although other partner nations fund a substantial portion of police salaries. For many years, Afghan pay and personnel systems have been paper-based, which have had limited accountability and traceability of funds. SIGAR's audits of ANA

and ANP pay have significantly informed our efforts to automate this system, which have accelerated over the past year. Most notably, we have been working with the MoD and MoI to develop an integrated pay and personnel system that will ensure we can verify that anyone receiving a salary or incentive payment is on the rolls and authorized to receive those payments, which will reduce opportunities for corruption. We are also making accurate entry of personnel information into automated databases a key condition of security assistance funding.

Finally, I want to highlight the procurement reforms that President Ghani has made to address corruption in the MoD and MoI. The immediate need for procurement reform became apparent about a year ago when our advisors presented information to President Ghani about corruption in fuel contracting processes. President Ghani fired those responsible, and now new contracts are in place. He also pulled responsibility for procurement up to a national-level authority, creating a new procurement agency. Most ministries have adapted to this new process and both the MoD and MoI are six months further along in the new process than they were last year. It also allowed us to influence new procurement law which was passed on January 12, 2016.

I should note that although some of our Afghanistan Security Forces Fund appropriation goes directly to the Afghan government, mainly to pay for military salaries, incentive pay, and supplies, such as fuel, the majority of it is spent

through the foreign military sales (FMS) system using DoD contracts on U.S.-made equipment. We have used the FMS system to procure the A-29s, MD-530s, up-armored HMMWVs, and the M16-A4s that we are buying to replace the AK 47s now used by Afghan police. We also use the FMS system to provide contracted logistic support to ensure the \$15 billion of equipment we have already fielded is properly sustained.

In closing, I want to again thank the subcommittee for this opportunity to discuss our efforts to develop the ANDSF and to ensure we are doing so responsibly. The U.S. presence of up to 9,800 military personnel through most of 2016 and a sustained presence of up to 5,500 by the end of 2016 will allow the United States to tailor train, advise, and assist efforts to continue developing key ANDSF capabilities in critical areas such as aviation and special operations while also maintaining a U.S. capability to deter threats in the region. Since the President's October 2015 announcement, coalition partners have similarly signaled their commitment to support the Resolute Support mission. Their continued support will help ensure we have enough advisors to continue to develop critical Afghan capabilities and gradually close gaps in those capabilities that are most important to our collective success in Afghanistan.

Regardless of our force presence in Afghanistan, the Afghan government will continue to rely on large amounts of financial assistance to the ANDSF until

such time as fighting significantly diminishes, perhaps as a result of the reconciliation process taking hold. We are in the process of working with our allies and partners to extend international funding commitments to 2020, and we look forward to working with Congress to ensure effective oversight of these efforts to achieve our national objectives in Afghanistan.