

Chairman Hartzler, Ranking Member Speier, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the invitation to provide the Defense Intelligence Agency's (DIA) assessment of the threats we are facing in Afghanistan and the capabilities of the Afghan National Defense Security Forces (ANDSF). Afghanistan remains a complex environment that DIA is closely monitoring.

In 2015, the ANDSF took primary responsibility for security in Afghanistan for the first full year. The Afghan National Army conducted several independent multi-corps operations against the insurgency in diverse regions of the country. Security forces also successfully secured almost all provincial capitals and national lines of communication, to include major highways. A positive development in the evolution of the ANDSF is the use of special operations forces to effectively respond to terrorist threats and to deny safe haven to networks across the country, albeit with coalition support.

Despite these increased capabilities, the ANDSF is still facing significant challenges in leadership, combat enablers, logistics and sustainment, and ministerial capacity. The ANDSF cannot manage the insurgency and ensure security across Afghanistan without further improvement in these key areas and the development of human capital. The 2015 fighting season highlighted these shortfalls and a security posture which is overstretched and ineffectively utilized. The temporary fall of Kunduz City in September 2015, the result of Taliban efforts to expand operations in north Afghanistan and exploit ANDSF capability gaps, illustrated these deficiencies. Despite the Afghan Army's ability to mount effective

counterattacks to regain lost terrain – as in Kunduz – the force is challenged to effectively employ organic aerial and ground fire enablers in support of reactive operations.

The late July announcement of former leader Mullah Omar's death, and the contentious accession of new leader Mullah Mansour, led to the emergence of a Taliban opposition faction in late 2015. Infighting between Mansour's supporters and the opposition has occurred, and the Taliban have faced competition from the ISIL's emergent regional affiliate. The Taliban and ISIL are focused on countering the international presence and expanding territorial footholds in Afghanistan. In the 2016 fighting season, we expect the Taliban-led insurgency will try to build on its temporary victory in Kunduz by attempting to surround and pressure population centers. They will also seek to make incremental gains in rural areas and conduct high-profile attacks against government and civilian targets in key cities, particularly Kabul.