

Chairman Skelton, Ranking Republican Mr. Hunter, and Members of the Armed Services Committee.

Thanks for your very kind invitation to speak today on a subject close to my heart – our efforts in Afghanistan.

I would note to the committee up front that I remain a member of the US Defense Department in my capacity as the Director of the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies at National Defense University, but the views I will represent today are my own. After nineteen months of service in Afghanistan, I remain very closely involved professionally and personally in working to insure the success of our long term undertaking there.

In my judgment, our efforts today in Afghanistan stand at a strategic fork in the road. We have important choices to make this year – choices which will ultimately determine the outcome of this noble and worthy mission.

I should note a few brief comparisons between Iraq and Afghanistan for the committee: Afghanistan is a land-locked, mountainous agricultural country with less than 30% of its population living in urban areas. It is among the world's poorest countries, with few to no natural resources. However, in size it is nearly 50% larger in landmass than Iraq – 647 thousand square kilometers to Iraq's 437 thousand – and it has 4 million more citizens, with a population of about 31 million to Iraq's 27 million. Note: Afghanistan is a significantly larger country with a larger population than Iraq.

We entered Afghanistan in 2001 in the wake of the 9-11 attacks to destroy Al Qaeda, overthrow their Taliban allies, and to help Afghanistan return to the community of nations as a democratic state. We remain in Afghanistan today to secure these goals, but also in recognition of the strategic importance of the region centered around Afghanistan. Our presence there with our NATO allies forms a vitally important and stabilizing influence on a volatile part of the world.

Afghanistan stands at the center of an immensely important strategic region. To the west is Pakistan – the world's second largest Muslim state, and one possibly armed with several dozen nuclear weapons. Its current crisis should give us pause as we re-assess our mission in Afghanistan – a mission with implications which extend well beyond Afghanistan's borders. On the northeast corner of Afghanistan is China, a power with growing regional energy and transportation interests. To the north lie three former republics of the Soviet Union – Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan – nations always feeling the pull north from Russia and east from China. And to the west, Iran – a growing regional power whose regional intentions remain suspect. Mr Chairman, this tour of the map around Afghanistan clearly paints the picture of a region of major strategic importance to the United States – and one in which we must continue to exert powerful and sustained leadership.

Since your visit to me in 2004 Mr Chairman, much has changed in Afghanistan. Security incidents – defined as reported acts of violence nation-wide -- totaled 900 in 2004; last year, in 2007 they totaled 8,950 across Afghanistan. Roadside bombs amounted to 325 attacks in 2004; last year, 1,469. Suicide bombings – decidedly a non-Afghan phenomenon – totaled 3 in 2004; last year they exceeded 130, a deadly new tactic being imported from Iraq. Total bombs dropped by Coalition air forces in 2004 were 86; last year, NATO dropped 3,572 bombs in Afghanistan – noteworthy in a war all now commonly define as a complex counter-insurgency fight. Finally, poppy production in 2004 totaled 131K hectares, and while dropping to 104K in 2005, ballooned in 2007 to a new record of 193K hectares. These selected trend lines -- although certainly not a comprehensive depiction of all sectors in Afghanistan – are certainly cause for concern.

On the military side of the ledger, we have also witnessed major changes in our approach since your visit in 2004. During 2004, our military forces under US Coalition command totaled nearly 20,000, including typically about 2000 coalition soldiers operating under an Operation Enduring Freedom mandate, generally with robust counter-insurgency rules of engagement. NATO in 2004 comprised only about 7000 troops, in Kabul and the northeast quarter of Afghanistan – and were primarily engaged in peace-keeping and reconstruction tasks. The combined total numbers of international forces in 2004 – US, Coalition, and NATO-- amounted to about 26,000. Today, international forces in Afghanistan total nearly 50,000 with another 3,200 American Marines pledged to join the effort soon.

In the command and control arena, the US three star HQ you visited in Kabul – a HQ which built a comprehensive civil-military counter-insurgency plan tightly linked to our embassy led by Ambassador Khalilzad -- has now been dis-established. In late 2006, NATO assumed the overall military command of Afghanistan. Our senior American military HQ – now a two star organization -- is once again located at Bagram air base, a ninety minute drive north of Kabul. Its geographic responsibility under NATO comprises only Regional Command East – territory representing less than one quarter of the same HQ 2004 responsibilities.

The enemy in Afghanistan -- a collection of Al Qaeda, Taliban, Hezbi Islami, and foreign fighters – is unquestionably a much stronger force than the enemy we faced in 2004. There are many reasons for this change, but it is I am afraid an undeniable fact. And of course this enemy extends and in many ways re-generates within the tribal areas of Pakistan.

Mr Chairman, in the face of these admittedly incomplete but worrisome trends, I can offer an equation: Success in Afghanistan equals Leadership plus Strategy plus Resources. Only if we fully commit our best efforts in all three areas – Leadership, Strategy, and Resources -- and relentlessly integrate these three successfully internally within the US and externally within the international effort -- will we be able to seize the opportunities available to reverse these troubling trends. Only if we make this a regional effort – most especially connecting the Afghanistan and Pakistan dimension – will we be able to once again move in a positive direction. Only if we objectively and

dispassionately examine both where we have been and where we are, will we be able to correctly shape where we are going. If we fail to do so, we face great risks in my estimation to our prospects for success. I look forward to be able to expand upon some possible further prescriptions during your questions. Thank you.