

HEARING OF THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE SUBJECT: SECURITY AND STABILITY IN AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ; DEVELOPMENTS IN U.S. STRATEGY AND OPERATIONS AND THE WAY AHEAD CHAIRED BY: REPRESENTATIVE IKE SKELTON (D-MO) WITNESSES: ROBERT M. GATES, SECRETARY OF DEFENSE; ADMIRAL MICHAEL G. MULLEN, CHAIRMAN, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF; AMBASSADOR ERIC S. EDELMAN, UNDERSECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR POLICY; VICE ADMIRAL JAMES A. WINNEFELD, JR., DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC PLANS AND POLICY, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF LOCATION: 2118 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING, WASHINGTON, D.C. TIME: 10:00 A.M. EDT DATE: WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2008

REP. SKELTON: Welcome, Secretary Gates; welcome, Admiral Mullen; welcome, Ambassador Edelman, General Winnefeld, for being with us today. Where are they? Right behind you. Thank you so much.

We're pleased to have you with us today to discuss the way forward in Afghanistan and Iraq. I will note, gentlemen, that your appearance today fulfills your obligation to brief this committee on force levels in Iraq under Section 1223 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009. As it turns out, this hearing could not be more timely.

To talk about about progress in Iraq and Afghanistan is to talk about the tremendous Americans serving in uniform in those theaters. It's only appropriate to begin the hearing by paying tribute to them, to their service and to their families.

Admiral Mullen, about nine months ago you testified to this committee. Let me quote you. We have discussed this since then. "Our main focus militarily in the region and in the world right now is rightly and firmly in Iraq. It is simply a matter of resources, of capacity. In Afghanistan, we do what we can. In Iraq, we do what we must." As you know, I have disagreed with you on that approach.

Given this, I find myself struggling with the president's announcement yesterday that nets one additional brigade for Afghanistan, and then not until this coming February. Almost all indicators of security and stability in Afghanistan are down this year. General McKiernan continues to plead publicly and to members of the Congress for additional troops, specifically three additional brigades, and the intelligence community and others, like Admiral Mullen, acknowledge that any future attack against our homeland is most likely to come from the safe havens that exist along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

No one's been more able to explain to me why Iraq is our first priority based upon national security interests. How can it be when those most likely to attack us are in Afghanistan? How is it that the commander in Iraq was given every resource needed to achieve his goals and we're not doing the same for the Afghan commander? Seven years ago after 9/11, when can we tell the American people we will be prepared to do what is needed to win in Afghanistan?

I know you both have spent an enormous amount of time in Afghanistan, but seven years on, I do not see a well-coordinated, comprehensive strategy for Afghanistan that addresses all aspects of the mission there, such as training and equipping the Afghan national security forces, counternarcotics, reconstruction, improving governance, and regional issues, including the border with Pakistan.

Such a strategy needs to marshal all our resources and lay out clearly what it will take to succeed. The fiscal year 2008 National Defense

Authorization Act required such a strategy, yet the department's answer was delivered two months late with four-month-old data and did not include the required strategy. It also did not include enough on specific measures of progress, a timetable for achieving goals or required budget information.

There are a lot of specifics I hope we can have an opportunity to discuss today, including the status and the capability of the Afghan national security force and the chronic shortfall of more than 2,500 trainers and mentors for that force.

We also must remember that we can only stabilize Afghanistan if we're able to handle its complex relationship with Pakistan. However, in April 2008, GAO reported that the U.S. lacks a comprehensive plan to eliminate insurgent safe havens in Pakistan's border region. Another GAO report found significant oversight and accountability problems regarding DOD coalition support funds which have been used to reimburse Pakistan nearly \$7 billion since 2002 for support of American operations.

A policy on Pakistan which has been largely shaped by the requirements of the war in Afghanistan has not proven resilient in the face of changing circumstances in that country. This all suggests that the U.S. has simply not devoted the focus or resources necessary to address the national security threats in Afghanistan and its border area.

I'm not discounting the gains made in Afghanistan since 2001. They're real and they're important successes. And of course, U.S. troops in Afghanistan continue to serve with excellence, with devotion, with patriotism. And we -- and we all take this for granted so much. However, more must be done. And we've seen all too well this year any gains can quickly vanish if we don't capitalize on them.

Our NATO allies must also do much more. We cannot expect our allies to step up if the U.S. itself does not demonstrate a strong commitment to the success of the Afghan mission.

In terms of Iraq, I applaud the military's successes there, but I remain concerned about the pace of political progress. The Iraqis still have not been able to even come to an agreement on holding provincial elections, much less address more fundamental questions like the future of Kirkuk. Given this, I have the real question of why we are not redeploying additional forces both to bolster our efforts in Afghanistan and to keep the pressure on the Iraqis to come to a sustainable political accommodation.

So gentlemen, I ask you, when you -- when will the conditions in Iraq be good enough and when will the conditions in Afghanistan have deteriorated enough to warrant the re-prioritization of focus and resources that's required to ensure the long-term success of the Afghanistan mission, when we'd be able to tell this committee with confidence that in Afghanistan we do what we must?

Now I turn to my good friend, my colleague from California, the ranking gentleman, Mr. Hunter, Duncan Hunter.

REP. DUNCAN HUNTER (R-CA): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank for holding this hearing in a very timely way, especially timely in light of the president's announcement yesterday to remove some 8,000 American troops from Iraq by February.

I want to join with you in thanking our witnesses for being with us today and for their testimony.

First, I think it's important, with respect to Iraq, to point out that we are winning in Iraq, that the United States is going to be leaving that theater in victory. And the metrics that are moving us toward that goal are manifested in the 80 percent reduction in the number of attacks; the 70 percent reduction in IED -- that is, roadside bomb -- attacks; the fact that we've found some 85 percent more caches this year than we did last year, with the enormous cooperation now mobilizing the citizenry of Iraq on our side; and also the increasing capability of the Iraqi security forces. That force is now standing up, fairly robustly, the 130-plus battalions.

And Mr. Chairman, I think it's clear now that the United States did the right thing in not trying to simply restand the existing Iraqi army, which included some 10,000-plus Sunni generals, but we had to build that force from scratch.

And although that was difficult and it's been a long process, I think that that's now paying off.

And finally I think that, I think, we also need to look at the leadership that's been manifested in this discussion over the last couple of days, with the books out about the American decisions that were made by President Bush, by the situation that surrounded the Iraq -- our Iraq policy over the last couple of years.

And you know, I noticed the president being criticized strongly by, I think, Mr. Woodward on a number of shows, over the last couple of days, implicitly criticized.

But you know, he pointed out that this president -- in the Post yesterday -- gave this message to General Petraeus. He said, I want you to win. Your mission is to win, and I will give you everything that you need to win.

Mr. Chairman, those words to the combatant commander, in that theater, are the most important words that an American president can deliver. And they're words that didn't go to the combatant commander in Vietnam, many years ago, when you had a president who literally decided which bridges were going to be bombed, on a certain day, and what result we hoped to expect from that particular day's operations.

I think that this operation in Iraq is going to be successfully concluded, as the Iraq army continues to stand up.

But Mr. Chairman, we now are focusing much more strongly than ever on Afghanistan. And Afghanistan involves a very complicated situation, in some ways similar to Iraq, in many ways very difficult and very different from the Iraq situation.

You've got the borderlands now in Pakistan approaching a level at which they are becoming now the new sanctuary for al Qaeda and Taliban operations. The political situation inside Pakistan complicates our ability to interfere with this new sanctuary. It's going to provide a challenge for us for the next many years. I think, Mr. Chairman, it's important that we establish an ISR curtain on the border with Pakistan, that we utilize American capabilities with respect to reconnaissance and surveillance, so that regardless of what happens

in Pakistan -- and that's a large question mark, where their politics are going to go, where their military's going to go -- that we have the ability to interdict operations emanating from that side of the border. And that's going to be a challenge for our ability to field systems. But I think we've got to field a lot of new systems and utilize everything that we presently have in our inventory.

Obviously, another challenge is to bring this team, this NATO team, this ISAF team plus into a full coordinated operation. And this is a massive challenge for us, with the disparate directives that are coming down from our partners' governments, from their civil governments with respect to conditions that are put on their troops, things they can do, things that they can't do. We need to have a unified command and we've done that to some degree by giving this second hat to the American commander, Mr. McKiernan -- General McKiernan. That's very important, but unifying and coordinating the allies is going to be a continuing challenge and one that we must focus on.

So I know this is a -- the order of the day, Mr. Chairman, I think over the next several years is going to be making our operation in Afghanistan work, and I look forward to listening to the secretary and the chairman's ideas with respect to where we go from here.

Lastly, Mr. Chairman, I think that it's very important for us to look at the increased troop levels that are being -- that are taking place now and have taken place largely unnoticed over the last couple of years in Afghanistan and remember the fact that Afghanistan -- the Afghanistan operations serves another purpose right now. It manifests another important Western exercise, and that is bringing together these allies and the NATO nations and the newly freed nations that have come out from behind the Iron Curtain, which today comprise some of our strongest allies -- bringing them together and training them to share this burden of fighting this war against terror with the United States.

And I think that one difficulty that we have is that a number of other nations have looked at us and said, we're going to let Uncle Sam do it. And when they look at the price tags that attend deploying forces in a foreign country, supporting those forces, the logistics, especially with respect to aerial operations, they say, it's going to be a lot easier to let the Americans pay for this.

And so part of your challenge, Mr. Secretary, and to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, part of your challenge is to bring our allies with us. And you've made statements like this in the past, to the effect that it's only right that in these difficult and contentious areas, where we are taking KIAs and WIAs, it's not acceptable to have allies which have conditions and rules, placed on them by their home governments, who say that they can't leave the garrison, that they can't operate in difficult areas, that they can't get involved in firefights, when the American Marines and soldiers are carrying that burden.

So bringing them with us in this exercise in Afghanistan is, I think, a very major part of meeting this challenge. So we've got a big spread of important issues and subissues here today.

Mr. Secretary, thank you for your leadership. And Chairman, Admiral Mullen, thank you for your leadership here over the last year. I look forward to your testimony.

REP. SKELTON: Thank you very much.

Mr. Secretary, first, let me thank you for not just your appearance today. And Admiral Mullen, thank you for your appearance today. It's critical that you be with us. But thank you for fulfilling the section in the -- last year's Defense bill regarding Iraq. We appreciate you doing that as part of this hearing.

Mr. Secretary.

SEC. GATES: Mr. Chairman, Representative Hunter, members of the committee, thank you for inviting us, to give you an update on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I would also like to express, at the outset, gratitude to the Congress, for recently passing legislation to enhance the benefits of the G.I. Bill. The department is very pleased with the outcome. And I can tell you that our men and women in uniform are deeply appreciative.

Of course, this is just one example of the many ways in which you have supported our troops over the past years. And on behalf of all of them, I thank you.

Last week, General Petraeus made his recommendations on the way forward in Iraq. Separate recommendations were submitted by the commander of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, the commander of Central Command, the service chiefs and the chairman.

Although each viewed the challenges from a different perspective, weighing different factors, all once again arrived at similar recommendations. We have already withdrawn the five Army brigade combat teams, two Marine battalions and the Marine Expeditionary Unit that were sent to Iraq, as part of the surge.

The president announced yesterday that approximately 8,000 U.S. troops will be withdrawn from Iraq, by February, without being replaced. The withdrawal of approximately 3,400 non-combat forces -- including aviation personnel, explosive ordnance teams, combat and construction engineers, military police and logistics support teams -- all begin this month, will continue through this fall and winter and will be completed in January.

In addition, a Marine battalion stationed in Anbar will return in November. And another Army BCT will return by early February. The bottom line point is that the drawdowns associated with the president's announcements do not wait until January or February but in fact begin in a few days.

The continuing drawdown is possible because of the success in reducing violence and building Iraqi security capacity. Even with fewer troops, U.S. troops in Iraq, the positive trends of the last year have held and in some cases steadily continued in the right direction.

Our casualties have been greatly reduced, even though one is still too many. And overall violence is down 80 percent.

The recent turnover of Anbar province to Iraqi provisional control, the 11th of 18 provinces to be turned over, highlights how much the situation has improved.

My submitted testimony has more details on some of the other positive indicators as well as serious challenges that remain. In short, Iraqi security forces have made great strides, political progress has been incremental but significant, and other nations of the region are increasingly engaged with Iraq.

That said, there are still problems, such as the prospect of violence in the lead-up to elections, worrisome reports about sectarian efforts to slow the assimilation of the Sons of Iraq into the Iraqi security forces, Iranian influence, the very real threat that al Qaeda continues to pose, and the possibility that Jaish al- Mahdi could return.

Before moving on to Afghanistan, I would like to make a few general comments and put the successes of the past year and a half into some context. The president has called our reduction in troop numbers a return on success. I, of course, agree, but I would expand further. The changes on the ground and in our posture are reflective of fundamental change in the nature of the conflict. In past testimony, I have cautioned that no matter what you think about the origins of the war in Iraq, we must get the end game there right. I believe we have now entered that end game, and our decisions today and in the months ahead will be critical to regional stability and our national security interests for years to come.

When I entered this office, the main concern was to halt and reverse the spiraling violence in order to prevent a strategic calamity for the United States and allow the Iraqis to make progress on political, economic and security fronts. Although we all have criticisms of the Iraqi government, there can be no doubt that the situation is much different and far better than it was in early 2007. The situation, however, remains fragile.

Disagreements in our country still exist over the speed of the drawdown and whether we should adhere to hard and fast timelines or more flexible time horizons. I worry that the great progress our troops and the Iraqis have made has the potential to override a measure of caution born of uncertainty. Our military commanders do not yet believe our gains are necessarily enduring, and they believe that there are still many challenges and the potential for reversals in the future.

The continuing but carefully modulated reductions the president has ordered represent, I believe, not only the right direction but also the right course of action, especially considered planning -- considering planned and unplanned redeployments by some of our coalition partners. The planned reductions are an acceptable risk today, but also provide for unforeseen circumstances in the future. The reductions also preserve a broad range of options for the next commander in chief, who will make his own assessment after taking office in January.

As we proceed deeper into the endgame, I would urge our nation's leaders to implement strategies that, while steadily reducing our presence in Iraq, are cautious and flexible and take into account the advice of our senior commanders and military leaders.

I would also urge our leaders to keep in mind that we should expect to be involved in Iraq for years to come, although in changing and increasingly limited ways.

Let me shift to Afghanistan. There we are working with the Afghans and coalition partners to counter a classic extremist insurgency fueled by ideology,

poppy, poverty, crime and corruption. My submitted statement details some positive developments, such as the increased commitment by our international partners on both the military and nonmilitary fronts, and the announcement yesterday to double the size of the Afghan army, which has demonstrated its effectiveness on the battlefield.

The statement also outlines in more detail some of the logistical challenges we still face and are working to improve, such as ISAF shortfalls and coordination problems between military forces and civilian elements, particularly the PRTs.

Persistent and increasing violence resulting from an organized insurgency is of course our greatest concern. The president has decided to send more troops to Afghanistan in response to resurgent extremism and violence reflecting greater ambition, sophistication, and coordination.

We did not get to this point overnight, so some historical context is useful. The mission in Afghanistan has evolved over the years since 2002, in both positive and negative ways. Reported insurgent activities and attacks began increasing steadily in the spring of 2006. This has been the result of increased insurgent activity, insurgent safe havens in Pakistan and reduced military pressure on that side of the border, as well as more international and Afghan troops on the battlefield, troops that are increasingly in contact with enemy.

In response to increased violence and insurgent activity in 2006, in January of 2007 we extended the deployment of an Army brigade and added another brigade. This last spring, the United States deployed 3,500 Marines. In all, the number of American troops in the country increased from less than 21,000 two years ago to nearly 31,000 today.

At the NATO summit in Bucharest in April, ISAF allies and partners restated their commitment to Afghanistan. France added 700 troops in eastern Afghanistan. This fall, Germany will seek to increase its troop ceiling from 3,500 to 4,500. Poland is also increasing its forces by more than a thousand troops. The number of coalition troops including NATO troops has increased from about 20,000 to about 31,000 and it appears this trend will continue as other allies such as the United Kingdom add more troops.

In Bucharest in April the president pledged the United States would send more troops to Afghanistan in 2009. Accordingly, we will increase U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan by deploying a Marine battalion this November and in January 2009 an Army brigade combat team, both units that had been slated for Iraq.

As in Iraq, however, additional forces alone will not solve the problem. Security is just one aspect of the campaign, alongside development and governance. We must maintain the momentum, keep the international community engaged and develop the capacity of the Afghan government.

The entirety of the NATO alliance, the EU, NGOs and other groups, our full military and civilian capabilities, must be on the same page in working toward the same goal with the Afghan government. I am still not satisfied with the level of coordination and collaboration among the numerous partners and many moving parts associated with civilian reconstruction and development and building the capacity of the Afghan government.

We do face committed enemies, which brings me finally to the challenge of the tribal areas in Pakistan. As in Iraq, until the insurgency is deprived of safe havens, insecurity and violence will persist. We are working with Pakistan in a number of areas.

And I do believe that Islamabad appreciates the magnitude of the threat, from the Tribal Areas, particularly considering the uptick in suicide bombings directed at Pakistani targets.

During this time of political turmoil in Pakistan, it is especially critical that we maintain a strong and positive relationship with the government, since any deterioration would be a setback for both Pakistan and Afghanistan. The war on terror started in this region. It must end there.

Let me close by thanking again all members of the committee and the Congress as a whole for their support for our men and women in uniform. I have noted, on a number of occasions, how positive the public response has been, to those who have volunteered to serve.

Our nation's leaders across the political spectrum have lead the way in honoring our servicemen and women, not just by providing the funds they need for their mission but also by publicly declaring their support and admiration of our troops. I thank you for your sentiment and I thank you for your leadership during these challenging times.

Mr. Chairman, before I close, I would like just to take a moment also to take this opportunity to share, with the committee, my decision to terminate the current Air Force tanker solicitation.

As you know, the department has been attempting, over the past seven years, to find a proper way forward on replacing the current fleet of U.S. Air Force KC-135 tankers.

Most recently we have been engaged in discussions with the competing companies, on changes to the draft RFP that would address the findings and recommendations of the GAO's review of the Boeing protest.

It has now become clear that the solicitation and award process cannot be accomplished by January. Thus I believe that rather than hand the next administration an incomplete and possibly contested process, we should cleanly defer this procurement to the next team.

Over the past seven years, this process has become enormously complex and emotional, in no small part due to mistakes and missteps on the part of the Defense Department. It is my judgment that in the time remaining to us, we cannot complete a competition that would be viewed as fair and competitive in this highly charged environment.

I believe that the resulting cooling-off period will allow the next administration to review objectively the military requirements and craft a new acquisition strategy for the KC-X as it sees fit.

I am assured that the current KC-135 fleet can be adequately maintained to satisfy Air Force missions for the near future. Sufficient funds will be recommended in the FY '09 and follow-on budgets to maintain the KC-135 at high mission-capable rates.

In addition, the department will soon recommend, to the Congress, the disposition of the pending FY '09 funding for the tanker program and plans to continue funding the KC-X program in the FY '10 to '15 budgets presently under review.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. SKELTON: Mr. Secretary, thank you very much.

Admiral Mullen, thank you for your appearance today, sir.

ADM. MULLEN: Chairman Skelton, Representative Hunter, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear today. And thanks as well for all you do to support our men and women in uniform and their families.

Having visited with our troops all over the world, I can tell you they are aware and appreciative of America's support, support which in so many ways emanates from this committee and from the Congress as a whole. So again, on their behalf I thank you for that.

Let me begin today by also expressing my appreciation to the president and Secretary Gates for their support of our armed forces and of the family members of those who serve. Today, on the eve of the seventh anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, we are reminded again of just how critical that service really is; and consequently, in an all-volunteer force, where people have other choices, how absolutely vital is the recognition and support of the federal government for the needs of our servicemen and women.

On that note, I stand particularly grateful today for the president's support of the recommendations that Secretary Gates and I have made to him with respect to the way forward in Iraq and Afghanistan. I need not recount for you here the details of those recommendations nor the circumstances that underpin them. Secretary Gates has just done that, and I'm in complete agreement with his views. Today, rather, I wish to make the following points.

First, the recommendations that went forward to the secretary and to the president represented a consensus view of the military leadership in this country. The process by which we -- they were derived was candid, transparent and thoroughly collaborative. The entire chains of command for both Iraq and Afghanistan were involved, engaged, including the Joint Chiefs.

We did not all enjoy complete agreement early on. Frankly, I would have been surprised had it been otherwise. One sees war, feels it, fights it, leads it, from one's unique perspective. The key to success over the long term is proving able to see it also from another's perspective, be it in the enemy's or the public's or the chain of command, and being informed by that knowledge as you move forward. I can assure you that all of us at all levels in the chain of command considered the whole of each struggle, the totality of each effort and the need to preserve on a global scale our greater national interests. Some in the media have described our final recommendations as a compromise solution.

And to the degree that this explains the process we employed, I would agree, but it would be wrong to conclude that our proposal represented a compromise in any way of our commitment to success. We did not compromise one war for the other.

And that, Mr. Chairman, brings me to my second point. Iraq and Afghanistan are two different fights. Many of you have been to both countries. You know these differences: the enemy's various objectives, the political and economic challenges unique to each culture, the weather, even the ground. As one soldier in Bagram told me in Afghanistan, the terrain itself can be the enemy. We treated the needs of each war separately and weighed our decisions for each solely against the risks inherent and the resources available.

Given the extraordinary success Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus have achieved in Iraq, the dramatically improved security on the ground, the growing competence of the Iraqi military and police forces, the growing confidence of Iraqi political leaders and the economic progress which is burgeoning, it is our view that the risks of drawing down by one brigade and one Marine battalion is minimal, at best, and can be mitigated by the readiness of coalition forces already in theater or back at home should a contingency arise to warrant their employment. The rewards, on the other hand, are potentially great as we seek to build dwell time for our troops and their families and have at our disposal a rested, stronger, more capable strategic reserve for worldwide crises.

As always, conditions on the ground matter most. And we reserve the right to recommend adjustments to those plans should those conditions require it. Conditions in Afghanistan certainly do require it, and I don't speak of Afghanistan without also speaking of Pakistan. For my view, these two nations are inextricably linked in a common insurgency that crosses the border between them.

You have all seen the challenges we've faced, particularly in the south and east as Taliban and al Qaeda fighters grow bolder and more sophisticated. You've seen the willingness of these disparate groups of fighters to better collaborate and communicate from safe havens in Pakistan; their ability to launch ever more sophisticated, even infantry-like attacks against fixed coalition positions; their increasing reliance on foreign fighters; and their growing and flagrant willingness to use innocent people as shields. Add to this a poor and struggling Afghan economy, a still healthy narcotics trade and a significant political uncertainty in Pakistan and you have all the makings of a complex, difficult struggle that will take time. I'm not convinced we're winning it in Afghanistan. I am convinced we can. That is why I intend to commission and have looked -- are looking -- I'm looking at a new, more comprehensive military strategy for the region that covers both sides of that border. It's why I pushed hard for the continued growth and training of Afghan national security forces. It's why I pressed hard on my counterparts in Pakistan to do more against extremists and to let us do more to help them. And it's why the chiefs and I recommended the deployment of a Marine battalion to Afghanistan this fall, and the arrival of another Army brigade early next year.

These forces by themselves will not adequately meet General McKiernan's desire for up to three brigades, but they are a good and important start. Frankly, I judge the risk of not sending them too great a risk to ignore. My expectation is that they will need to perform both the training mission and the combat and combat support missions simultaneously until such times that we can provide additional troops, and I cannot say at this point when that might be.

Again, we must continually assess progress there and in Iraq, weighing it against the global risk and the health of the force, before we make any more commitments.

And that, sir, leads me to my final point. As I once said about Iraq, let me now say about Afghanistan, absent a broader international and interagency approach to the problems there, it is my professional opinion that no amount of troops in no amount of time can ever achieve all the objectives we seek in Afghanistan. And frankly, we're running out of time.

We can train and help grow the Afghan security forces, and we are. In fact, they're on track to reach a total end strength of 162,000 by 2010. The Marines conducting their training are doing a phenomenal job. But until those Afghan forces have the support of local leaders to improve security on their own, we will only be there as a crutch, and a temporary one at that.

We can hunt down and kill extremists as they cross over the border from Pakistan, as I watched personally us do during a daylong trip recently the Korengal Valley. But until we work more closely with the Pakistani government to eliminate safe havens from which they operate, the enemy will only keep coming.

We can build roads and schools and courts, and our Provincial Reconstruction Teams are doing just that. But until we've represented in those teams more experts from the fields of commerce, agriculture, jurisprudence and education, those facilities will remain but empty shells. Fewer than one in 20 PRTs throughout the country are supported by nonmilitary personnel.

Afghanistan doesn't just need more boots on the ground; it needs more trucks on the roads, teachers in schools, trained judges and lawyers in those courts. Foreign investment, alternative crops, sound governance, the rule of law, these are the keys to success in Afghanistan. We cannot kill our way to victory and no armed force anywhere, no matter how good, can deliver these keys alone. It requires teamwork and cooperation. And it will require the willingness by everyone in the interagency and international community to focus less on what we think we each do best and more on what we believe we can all do better together.

I know you understand that and I appreciate all you do on this committee to support those of us in uniform.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. SKELTON: Thank you so much for your statement, Admiral.

As a side note, Mr. Secretary, you mentioned the end game in Iraq. It's rather interesting to recall the Sun Tzu precept that said that a war should not be entered into without considering the end of that war. And I question whether that was considered to begin with.

I have a question and I'll only ask one at this time, if each of you would like to share it. Is Iraq still the higher priority than Afghanistan? I think we should know what the priority is between the two and, to lift a phrase from an earlier testimony, Admiral, when we'll be able to do what we must to win in Afghanistan.

Mr. Secretary?

SEC. GATES: I don't think it's a mathematical equation. I would say that success in Iraq means that we are steadily reducing our commitment, our level of commitment and resources, particularly manpower to that theater. At

the same time, we are able under those circumstances to increase our level of commitment and resources to Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is a -- is a -- in some ways a more complex challenge, it seems to me, in terms of how it's addressed. For one thing, in Iraq, we and the Iraqis together, basically, are the principle players. And so if we reach agreement with the Iraqis on the strategy, then that's pretty well the strategy. In Afghanistan, we not only have many allies, we have diverse enemies.

We don't have a single adversary. We have the Taliban, we have the Hekmatyar Gulbuddin -- Gulbuddin Hekmatyar group, we have the Haqqani network, we have narco-thugs, we have al Qaeda, we have foreign fighters, and while these are in many respects a syndicate, they are not an integrated enemy.

So my view, the short answer to your question is that as opposed to saying which has higher priority, I would say we are reducing our commitments in Iraq and we are increasing our commitments in Afghanistan.

REP. SKELTON: Admiral?

ADM. MULLEN: Chairman, I spoke publicly in recent months about the hope -- as did the secretary -- the hope I would have to have conditions in Iraq support reducing the number of troops that we have there and then making decisions about what we would do with those troops. That is indeed happening. And I continue to have that hope as conditions over time continue to improve, the Iraqi security forces continue to improve, both military and police, that the economy keeps continuing to improve, and that that would allow us to continue to reduce troops there over time. I think the step that the president announced yesterday is a significant one and a very strong signal of what has happened in Iraq and also decisions to make to send additional troops into Afghanistan.

There are similarities between the two but there are also great differences. And I agree with the secretary that it is more complex, that there are many aspects of Afghanistan that need to be addressed more fully than just the security. We need to be able to provide, with the Afghan forces, the security so that country can develop. But there is a great deal more to be done in those other areas that I talked about in my opening statement.

So they are both a priority right now. I think we're in a good place with respect to Iraq and being able to leverage that. And look to increasing troops in Afghanistan is a very important step, in my view.

REP. SKELTON: Thank you so much.

Mr. Hunter.

REP. HUNTER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And again, gentlemen, thanks for being here. Mr. Secretary, just a thought on ISR. We've got the modularization of the Army, and the brigade combat team concept is an idea that was designed to ensure that we had a commonality of equipment and an efficiency, if you will, in the ability to chop units and to meld units and maintain military efficiency.

Looking just -- we've looked at -- preliminarily some of the staff members of the committee have done some analysis on ISR assets that we have throughout the Army and the other services, but primarily the Army.

And it would appear to me that we've got assets that could be moved, could be focused on Afghanistan.

And if the genius of effective military operations is being able to concentrate forces, that is, to focus resources, whether it's personnel or equipment, on a focal point, in a limited area, we shouldn't let the brigade combat team concept keep us from breaking loose some of that equipment, if we've got it in other places, having the flexibility to move that perhaps from other theaters and move it into the Afghanistan theater.

And just looking preliminarily at the operations, the buildup of operations and the nature of those operations and the fact that we're seeing a migration of the IED threat, into Afghanistan, and that we need more surveillance capability, it would appear to me that we may need to look at moving existing assets very quickly into that theater.

So just an idea there; I would hope we could work together with you on that and just assure that we have plenty of ISR in the Afghanistan theater.

SEC. GATES: Mr. Hunter, I would just say that first of all, we are going to, because of the success of the Army's Task Force ODIN in Iraq, we are going to recreate Task Force ODIN or replicate it in Afghanistan, with additional assets.

I think that most of the other combatant commanders would tell you, I have with the help of the chairman redirected too many of their ISR assets, from other theaters, into Iraq and Afghanistan.

So we have looked very closely at all of the ISR resources worldwide, in terms of what we can do to provide additional capabilities particularly in Afghanistan.

REP. HUNTER: Okay, thank you and I would hope we could continue to work on that.

The other thing is, you know, if we look at our allies, look at the conditions that have been imposed, on some of our allies, with respect to what they can do, down to the point where some of them can't leave the garrison in Afghanistan, give us, if you will, a -- your thoughts, on how the allies are performing and how well we're doing in bringing this team, this NATO-plus, if you will, into what is really their major military operation since their inception. How are we doing? And how do we invoke more cooperation from the allies?

SEC. GATES: Let me speak to that and then invite the chairman to add his views.

I think, first of all, one of the positive results that has not gotten much attention out of the Bucharest NATO summit last April was the decision on the part of several of our allies to reduce or remove the caveats -- the national caveats that they had on their troops. So we have seen in several instances our allies be able to step to the plate and take on the full range of responsibilities since April that they have not done before.

The reality is that some of our allies have a significant number of people in Afghanistan. And I mentioned the Germans are going from 3,500 to 4,500. And the Germans basically are taking care of RC North in Afghanistan.

We have a significant Italian and Spanish presence in the western part of Iraq. The heavy fighting in the south is carried out not just by the United States but by the United Kingdom, by Australia, the Canadians, the Dutch and the Danes. And I would tell you that they are in the fight all the way. And it is one of the sad results of that that the British, the Dutch, the Canadians especially, the Australians all are taking significant casualties proportionate to the size of the force that they have there and proportionate to their size of their armed forces.

So I would say that particularly in RC South, where the fighting is the heaviest, our allies are playing a really critical role for us and are doing so both with skill and great courage. So I would say that the trend lines are very positive in this regard.

REP. HUNTER: Admiral?

ADM. MULLEN: Mr. Hunter, I would only add that in my interaction with my counterparts, which is very frequent, on this issue, and in particular those countries that the secretary mentioned, they really are very committed. And it has changed over the last year. When I'm in RC South and visiting, that kind of feedback is what I get from our people on the ground with respect to the Canadians, the Brits, the Aussies, the -- and indeed the French just sent an extra battalion in, and tragically, not too long after they were there, they lost 10 of their soldiers. So there are -- there is a significant improvement, in my view, of that.

And I think the overall 10,000 troop increase there that the secretary spoke to in his opening statement is part of this. We've tried to focus particularly over the last year, year and a half, and I think they've responded. And I think they will continue to respond -- maybe not as quickly as we would like, maybe not with as much force, but clearly they are heading in the right direction in many of those countries.

REP. HUNTER: Okay. Thank you, gentlemen.

Just one last point -- Mr. Secretary, I've looked at the timeline for the replication of Task Force ODIN with respect to Afghanistan. It's -- there may be some ways we can make some improvements on that. I would hope you'd work with the committee on that and we might be able to move some equipment a little bit quicker.

And lastly, rules of engagement -- looking at some of the battles that have taken place in the south recently -- we may need to engage on that a little further, in that there are different rules of engagement, as you know, with respect to different countries. And that provides -- at some point provides some issues when you have joint operations, and there have been one or two instances where there has been a -- I think where we've had an issue or two arise. But I think we'll talk to you about that off record.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. SKELTON: Thank you.

John Spratt?

REP. JOHN SPRATT (D-SC): Mr. Secretary, Admiral Mullen, thank you very much for your testimony and for your service.

I think you both agree that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have cost us vastly more than anyone ever anticipated in dollar terms, and frankly, there's no near-term end in sight. By our calculation on the Budget Committee, with the help of CBO, Iraq and Afghanistan between '01 and '09, a 10-year period of time, have cost about \$859 billion.

We asked CBO if they would give us a projection of the next 10 years, assuming a phase-down to about 75,000 troops in both theaters in a steady state by 2013. And the number they gave us for that 10-year period of time was \$913 billion. Together that's \$1.8 trillion, which I think you'd agree is a lot of money and a consequential number. If we spend it here, we have to forego things elsewhere.

We're six years into the engagement in Iraq and we still don't get the good numbers. We still don't get budget requests that reflect real needs. And this year's a good example. The request for the supplemental expenditures needed for Iraq and Afghanistan in this year's budget is \$70 billion. I think you both agree that's a plug. It's not a real number. It's not a realistic number.

In addition, if you look at the president's budget over time, over a five-year period of time -- he gave us a run-out of the numbers over that period of time -- in real dollars the Defense budget, the O50, goes down each year from '09 through '13.

So my question to you both is, when can we expect to get realistic numbers, a realistic budget request? I know that to start with, you didn't have a cost base to operate upon, but we've been there some time now. There ought to be some way to extrapolate from past costs based upon present and future plans and come up with numbers that are a lot more realistic and reliable than the numbers we've got.

Could you provide us those numbers now, or is there any way we could obtain those numbers from you in the near future, or at least a commitment for the budget request that we have more realistic numbers than we've had in previous fiscal years?

SEC. GATES: Mr. Spratt, I think that now that the president has made his decisions in terms of the next step on the drawdowns in Iraq and also the reinforcement in Afghanistan, that we are now in a position to go back and -- I couldn't agree with you more. We all knew that the \$70 billion was basically to get us through March or thereabouts next year. And we will come back to you with what we think is the most realistic additional number on top of the 70 billion (dollars).

REP. SPRATT: Is that in the near future?

SEC. GATES: I hope so, sir.

REP. SPRATT: All right, sir. Thank you very much.

REP. SKELTON: Mr. Saxton, please. (Short audio break.) McHugh, I'm sorry.

REP. JOHN M. MCHUGH (R-NY): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, welcome. Thank you, as always, for your service. I'm not sure, this may be the last time we see you, certainly for this year. But -- I know I speak for all my colleagues -- we deeply appreciate your being with this committee on any number of occasions, but more importantly, for the great work you do on behalf our men and women in uniform.

Admiral Mullen, the last time you and I had a chance to chat, we talked about the kinds of things you mentioned today. And I couldn't agree with your comments more. The fact of the matter is, troop strength is important, we need to focus on it, but Afghanistan presents a much more complex picture than just force structure. And not just Afghanistan. I don't know how we solve Afghanistan or our nation's and world's problem without solving the problem of the FATA (in/and ?) Pakistan. The time we did discuss it, Admiral, we talked about the Frontier Corps, which remained kind of as the focus of addressing those what I argue are ungoverned tribal areas, not administered tribal areas.

But that corps had a rather rocky start, and yet it remained the key part of the hoped-for solution there. I wonder if you could give me an update on how you view the Frontier Corps program.

ADM. MULLEN: If I can, Mr. McHugh, I'd just go a little broader. Initially the Pakistani -- an equally important if not more important part of that is what the Pakistani military is doing in literally right now, and they've had ongoing operations for several months now and will continue to do that. And I'd capture the shift that their leadership has generated. If I look at the forces they have now in the North-West Front Provinces and that part of Pakistan, a year ago, I think there were eight or nine brigades, and there are at least 10 more there now. And there -- so there's been a big shift and a commitment on the part of the Pakistani military.

In addition, there is -- we do have a focus on the Frontier Corps. We are in a position to commence training with them, training the trainers, if you will, with a little more -- with more capacity than we've had in the past.

And I also know that there's been a leadership change at the head of the Frontier Corps, which General Kayani made, which is significant.

So as I indicated, this isn't going to happen quickly, but I think it is headed in the right direction, and it is the combination, in the long run, I think, of both the Pak mil, the Frontier Corps and then the development that would come to follow that on the heels -- to be able to sustain this over the long run.

REP. MCHUGH: Well, I won't ask you, because I don't think it's answerable at this point, but I certainly hope that the ever-changing face of the Pakistan government continues to support that initiative and continues to support the Pak mil, because I agree with you that that's -- it's critical to have those folks in there trying to govern their own territory.

I just got back from my ninth trip to Iraq and had a chance to do some visits to the Iraqi special operators training, live-fire demonstration, went

out and saw the military police training that the Italians are doing, I think, a fabulous job on -- et cetera, et cetera.

MORE And as we look at the progress in Iraq, clearly a key component of that is the training up of the ISF, the Iraqi security forces -- over 72 percent, now, as I understand it, of their available forces. They're taking the lead. And that has freed up pressure.

Clearly, in Afghanistan, the announcement to double the size of the Afghan national security force, I think, is a great step in the right direction.

But back in June of this year, the GAO made a very pointed criticism of our efforts there and it said that they could find no coordinated, detailed plan, U.S. plan, to develop ANSF. If we're going to have the success in Afghanistan vis-a-vis their national security forces that we've seen in Iraq and enjoyed the benefits therefrom, how would you answer that GAO criticism? Do you feel that it's unfounded or have there been steps taken since June to address that and to develop a coordinated plan to reach that goal of 162,000 by 2010, I believe you said?

ADM. MULLEN: Yes, sir. Actually, I would -- I would take issue with the fact that there's no plan. We've had two -- Major General Bob Cone, who is there now, and his predecessor, General Bob Durbin, who -- actually put in place and are executing a very robust plan to train both the army and the police forces.

Where we are -- and we are short trainers. I think we have been short trainers, and so in my statement, where I talk about -- I think forces that go in will be doing both security operations and training simultaneously; that's what the Marines are doing in the west right now. And they're initial -- they're really the first force we've had in that part -- significant force we've had in that part of Afghanistan. And we need to generate more trainers. There's no question about that.

From the -- from the military standpoint, we've actually made an awful lot of progress. We are -- we've got a long way to go on the police side, which is a combination of both trainers, corruption, the kind of background that has existed there for a long time, although it's being addressed. So while it is not perfect, it is an area that has a great deal of focus and will continue on the part of the leadership here and our leadership there.

REP. MCHUGH: Thank you, both gentlemen.

Mr. Chairman, thank you.

REP. SKELTON: Solomon Ortiz.

REPRESENTATIVE SOLOMON ORTIZ (D-TX): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have a question for both of the witnesses. And let me say, thank you so much for the service to our country. And I know that we're going through some very difficult times. But as we know, there's an election coming about in the next few months.

I was just wondering, what planning and work has been done to enable the next administration to make its own decisions, about force levels, upon

taking office after who wins the presidency? And what limits does the president's recent decision place upon force level changes?

Also what plans to ensure that Iraqi security forces are ready and willing to and able to accept additional missions and responsibilities, beginning sometime in February? And my last, and I'm asking all these questions, because a hurricane is getting ready to strike my district as we speak.

You know, and how much influence do non-governmental organizations and former military personnel have in formulating United States strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan? And how does those organizations and individuals interact with Department of Defense leadership and combatant commanders?

And one of the reasons why I'm asking this last portion of the question is because I've had several calls, because of this series of these stories being written in The Washington Post. And maybe both of you can make some comments on what I -- on my questions. And thank you so much.

SEC. GATES: Mr. Ortiz, first of all, I think that the new president will have a full array of options when he enters office, in terms of troop levels in Iraq. As I indicated in my opening remarks, I hope that whoever the new president is will listen closely to the commanders in the field and senior military leaders.

I've made the comment before that those who worry and are concerned that the military view was not taken sufficiently into account, at the beginning of the war, would not neglect it as we get deeper into the endgame. But there is nothing in place that would constrain the decisions of a new president, in terms of policies or anything else that a new president could not change. So new president will have complete flexibility and constrained only by his view of our national security interest.

In terms of the Iraqi security forces, based on information that -- the latest information that I have, from General Petraeus, there are now, I think, 164 Iraqi army battalions in the fight. And about 107 of those are either in the lead or operating independently at this point.

So I think that our view is, particularly when we look at the operations in Basra, in Mosul, in Sadr City and Diyala province and elsewhere, the Iraqi army is acquitting itself very well.

In terms of the role of the civil side, of the conflict, and their engagement in the Iraq campaign plan, I would tell you that I believe since post-war Germany, we have not had a closer partnership, between a senior military commander and a United States ambassador, than we have in Baghdad.

And Ryan Crocker and his team -- and he has ambassadorial-level colleagues working on the economy and other parts of the civil side of this. And Ryan has been an intimate partner in -- an equal partner with Dave Petraeus in putting together the overall campaign plan for Iraq. And when it is briefed to the president, it is briefed as the -- (audio break) -- has had a significant voice in putting together the campaign.

Admiral?

(Audio break.)

REP. ORTIZ: (Audio break) -- military on making their decisions?

SEC. GATES: Well, I think the honest answer to that is that there are -- there are more than a few NGOs that are uneasy about a relationship -- too close a relationship with the military. And I think to the degree that their influence -- I'm sure there is some contact, because, after all, they're out there in the field working and interact with our troops and our commanders all the time, but I suspect in terms of formal input of their views, it's probably more likely to be done through the ambassador and the embassy than it is through the commander.

REP. ORTIZ: Mr. Chairman, can we allow --

ADM. MULLEN: Yes, sir. The only thing I would offer in addition, with respect to the options for a new president, is the full range -- and we base these recommendations on what I call a continuous assessment -- it's ongoing, every day -- and that from an analytical standpoint and a where-we-are standpoint, we'll be prepared to make those recommendations based on what's -- what is, in fact, going on at the time that a new president comes into office.

I've -- I'm very encouraged by what I see with the ISF. I don't just mean what gets reported in. I've spent time with them, their leadership. They have a skip in their step and a focus on their own country that they are thoroughly enthusiastic about right now as they've continued to grow and to take the lead.

And the only thing I would offer with respect to specifically what's been -- you know, what's been written now or written recently, and one is -- I know I'm quoted in that book. I was not interviewed for that book. Secondly, I think it is important -- and I'll tell you the process, I mean, since I've been chairman, that I've been able to work up the chain of command and give my very frank advice through the secretary to the president and that has been unimpeded and I very much appreciate that. And I think that is a very important part of our democracy and how the system is supposed to work.

REP. ORTIZ: Again, thank you both for your service. Thank you so much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. SKELTON: Thank you.

Mr. Thornberry. REP. MAC THORNBERRY (R-TX): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Afghanistan is not Iraq, but as someone said on television recently, progress in Iraq has been wildly successful over the past couple years. And so I'm thinking about lessons that we can learn from that success in Iraq and see whether they might apply to Afghanistan, particularly in the area of training and fielding Afghan security forces.

I heard what the admiral said, we don't have enough trainers and some of the other constraints, but I'm wondering, Mr. Secretary, what are the lessons that you think our country can learn from the training, building up and fielding of security forces in Iraq that have application to Afghanistan?

Is it a situation where it just takes a certain amount of time? Are there tribal complexities you have to work through? Is it a question of how many -- of resources? What are the lessons we can learn from what has worked?

SEC. GATES: The chairman probably has more insight on this than I do, but let me take a quick stab at it and then turn to him. I think that we've learned a lot in both places. I think we're applying a lot of lessons that we have learned in Iraq to Afghanistan in terms of overall counterinsurgency strategy, as well as the successes and lessons learned in terms of training the indigenous forces. I think that in both places you have to be mindful of the tribal and the ethnic and sectarian divisions -- more so in Iraq, on the sectarian side, than in Afghanistan.

But I think what's important and one of the most heartening aspects of the developments both in Iraq and Afghanistan is that the national army is emerging as a national institution in which people from all parts of society are participating and working together. And they provide perhaps a more immediate model than the more slowly developing civilian capacity of both governments. And I think that some of the lessons that we've learned in Iraq have helped us accelerate the effort in Afghanistan. Nobody's ever questioned the ability of the Afghans to fight, but training them, planning, logistical support, all of the things that go into successful military operations -- these are lessons that I think have been learned first in Iraq and certainly are being applied in Afghanistan.

Chairman?

ADM. MULLEN: I think we've -- there are a great deal of -- a great number of the lessons which apply directly. It took us a while to figure out that this was a counterinsurgency and that we had to secure the people, and that's a direct application -- this in addition to the surge, the turnaround in Anbar, which was a tribal turnaround; an ability to employ Iraqi -- young Iraqi men as Sons of Iraq, to give them another option.

Mr. Hunter talks about the way we get at this, which has been, in terms of the combat side of this, the ISR lessons, which apply directly. In fact, there's an argument that as we move forces out of Iraq, we're going to need more ISR there to be the multiplier for our Special Forces that it is, which makes capacity a challenge both there and in Afghanistan. The -- we are not having challenges with the sectarian aspects of the Afghan national army. So, and yet we have huge challenges with the police. And then the similarities, in terms of the rest of governance, and the thing that I worry most about is how poor this country is and how long it's going to take to develop it and in a way that, you know, the resources are not there as they are in Iraq, once the economy gets moving there. It's going to be a while before we're there in Afghanistan, among other things.

(Cross talk.)

SEC. GATES: Mr. Chairman, let me just add one quick comment to the last thing the admiral said.

Increasing the size of the Afghan army, to 122,000 with a float of 12,000 though in training, is going to cost several billion dollars a year. Overall Afghan government revenues this year will be somewhat under \$700 million.

This is an area frankly where we have some money in the budget going forward for this. But this is an area where, we think, some of our allies who are not committing troops, in Afghanistan, can contribute to paying for the cost of expanding the army, the Afghan army.

REP. THORNBERRY: Thank you.

REP. SKELTON: Dr. Snyder.

REPRESENTATIVE VIC SNYDER (D-AR): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Gates, it's good to see you here. I hope this isn't your last time before us, but it may be. We appreciate your service so very much and your future service to the country, whatever that is.

And Admiral Mullen, thank you for being here also.

I wanted to ask, begin, Admiral Mullen, with what you said in your written statement. And I'm one of those who has been asking, for some time now, about the request from our commanders, in Afghanistan, for more troops. And you specifically talk about that.

You say, talk about putting a Marine battalion in Afghanistan this fall and another Army brigade next year. You say, these forces by themselves will not adequately meet General McKiernan's desire for up to three brigades but they are a good start.

You refer later on, until such time that we can provide additional troops, I cannot say at this point when that might be. What, and this is consistent with what you said before, about the difficulty of finding additional troops.

What does that say, this difficulty of finding these troops that have been requested, for some time now, by our commanders in Afghanistan? What does it say about our ability to respond to other contingencies around the world?

Press reports in the last day about potential leadership changes in North Korea. I mean, what does it say -- here we are the greatest nation in the world and we're struggling to respond to a shooting war with the levels of troops that you think that you need. What does it say about our ability to respond to other contingencies that may flare up and require large numbers of troops?

ADM. MULLEN: I think it says clearly these are our priorities and they've been our priorities. I've been very clear and very consistent on the growing risk globally, and I've characterized that in my own risk assessment as significant, not unable to respond. And it would obviously depend on what the crisis was. And in fact, you know, if we had a requirement and the American people and the president of the United States said -- the president of the United States said we're going to go meet this requirement, there are options to do that. But I think the risk is significant and we really need to look at how much harder we can press this force.

We have -- I mean, our Air Force and our Navy have been very heavily engaged, not as heavily as, clearly, our ground forces, but they've been on a pretty good operational tempo, and we have tremendous reserve capacity there as

well. So it speaks more than anything else, I think, to that at this particular point in time.

General McKiernan has asked for more forces. This does meet a significant part of that.

What is also really important here is the -- both the Marine battalion and the Army brigade are very important, but what is really critical in this is the Marine battalion which goes and relieves the 2/7 Marines, who, without relief, with what they've done, you worry about, in fact, the insurgents coming back, so to be able to sustain it, the effort in that part of Afghanistan.

We've done the same thing with coalition and Afghan National Army forces in the south, where the Marines went in and they're being relieved there.

So those are really significant steps forward. That said, General McKiernan has asked for three more brigades, and it's going to be a while before we get them there.

REP. SNYDER: Are you satisfied that everything is occurring on the ground in Afghanistan that when we put additional troops in -- and both presidential candidates are talking about putting additional troops there -- that everything is set for success?

And by that, what I'm specifically asking about is these issues of coordination between our forces, other forces, between folks on the ground -- they're doing intel work. It seems to me that we could set additional troops up in a chaotic situation for more chaos if we're not working through some of the challenges that you have there. What's the status of those kinds of challenges?

ADM. MULLEN: I think there are -- there are areas where it's working very well. And I'll use an -- a very specific example, the Brits and the 24 Marines have been fighting together over the last -- better part of the last year. And their coordination and impact has been very significant.

There are other challenges, although we all recognize -- and I think General McKiernan does as well -- that a campaign plan needs to be adjusted. And he's doing that. And I believe also that it's got to be a campaign plan that is synchronized as best we can with what's going on in Pakistan.

So all that is in play as we look at better coordination and synchronization, but it's not just there. It's got to go across the other part of our interagency and international partners there and the other parts of putting us in a position to succeed in Afghanistan. And we're not there yet and there's still a lot of work to do with respect to that.

REP. SNYDER: If I could --

SEC. GATES: Mr. Snyder --

REP. SNYDER: Go ahead.

SEC. GATES: I would just add, in terms of the military coordination, one of the steps that we're taking is to -- is to name General McKiernan also not only as the commander of ISAF but also as commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan. This will give him broader purview and control over the training mission, over the range of activities, so that we think that there can be better

coordination both among American forces but also between American forces and our allies.

REP. SKELTON: I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Wilson. REP. JOE WILSON (R-SC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And Admiral, Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here today. I recently -- last month -- had an extraordinary opportunity. I appreciate being named by the chairman to serve on a codel to visit with our allies in Romania and Bulgaria. And as you mentioned, the contributions of NATO countries -- nearly a thousand troops from those two newly liberated countries are serving. And in visiting with the military officials, government officials, the citizens of those two countries, they were so proud of their forces serving in Afghanistan.

Additionally, it was just extraordinary to visit the joint Romanian-American air base MK Constanta in Romania, to visit Novo Selo, the joint Bulgarian-American base. It -- as the co-chair, along with Congresswoman Ellen Tauscher of the Bulgaria Caucus, it's a dream come true to see the relationship that's been developed and the very capable American forces who are working with our allies.

I want to thank you as a member of Congress, as a veteran -- 31 years in Army Guard -- as a parent. My second son just completed -- a Navy guy, I know the admiral will like this -- his four-month service in Baghdad. It was a very uplifting experience for him. He followed in the footsteps of my oldest son, who was in the Army Guard there for a year. I know firsthand from them the success of our troops.

Additionally my National Guard unit, the 218th Brigade, just completed a year serving in Afghanistan. I had the privilege of visiting with them every three months to find out their success in training the Afghan police and army units.

Over the weekend I went to something that would really make you so proud, the 132nd MP Company, South Carolina Army National Guard, for an awards program on their service in East Baghdad.

And indeed all the troops returned home. It was a very inspiring program of wonderful people who are protecting America by defeating the terrorists overseas.

As we look at this -- and Mr. Secretary, you identified the increase in the Afghan army from 82,000 to 122,000 -- but there's not a planned increase with the Afghan police. Should there be, or what is the status on working with the Afghan police forces?

SEC. GATES: The Afghan police are at -- I think the target for them is 82,000 independently, and I'm not -- I don't think I --

ADM. MULLEN: You have about 79(,000) --

SEC. GATES: Yeah, I'm not sure about any plan to increase the size of the Afghan police.

ADM. MULLEN: Everything that's come thus far from the -- from Afghanistan is that that's about right. Now that could change over time, but --

and in fact the target is 82(,000), and I think there's 78(,000) or 79(,000) who are actually in place.

Our efforts are -- that we're working with -- our effort is really focused on getting them trained. That's the significant next step. And we've got a long way to go with respect to that.

REP. WILSON: Another question -- I was very pleased that a constituent of mine, Major General Arnold Fields, who is a personal hero of mine, has been named to be the special inspector general for Afghan reconstruction. And there's been a concern, I was reading, about the funding and his ability to get that office put together. What's the status on the funding for that office?

SEC. GATES: I think we'll have to take that one and get back to you.

REP. WILSON: And specifically, it had been indicated it was authorized 20 million (dollars), but only 7 million (dollars) has been appropriated. And I just noticed that. But I ran into General Fields in his home county of Hampton, South Carolina. I was thrilled to find out that y'all have selected him for that important position.

A final question for Secretary Gates: In regard to our counternarcotics operations, what's the status in Afghanistan? SEC. GATES: Well, the Department of Defense and our military do not have a direct role in the counternarcotics program in Afghanistan.

We support DEA, which has a significant presence there.

There's no question that it's a problem. It's a problem getting our allies to take the problem seriously and being willing to engage on it.

It's kind of a little good news, big bad news story. The little good news is the poppy crop is now basically limited to seven provinces, thanks in no small part to some improvements in governance in some of the others. According to the U.N., the percentage of -- or the size of the fields under cultivation with poppies has dropped from about 197,000 hectares to about 150,000, so it's down about 19 percent. The fact is, though, that the seven provinces where they're growing the poppies more than meets world demand.

REP. WILSON: Well, thank you both for your efforts and leadership.

REP. SKELTON: The gentlelady from California, Ms. Tauscher.

REP. ELLEN TAUSCHER (D-CA): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Secretary, Admiral Mullen, thank you for being here.

You know, tomorrow's the seventh anniversary of one of the darkest days in American history, September 11th, and many of us will be at the Pentagon to honor the people that fell when Flight 77 hit the Pentagon.

Last weekend I led a bipartisan codel to Afghanistan and Pakistan, and I am very pleased to see that you -- under your leadership, Mr. Secretary and Admiral Mullen, that we have been able to rationalize a new policy to deal with the fact that the scene between Afghanistan and Pakistan, that ungovernable part of territory, is now -- that has been a haven for al Qaeda and the Taliban, where they have been able to refinance and recruit and retrain, is an area that we are now taking a very strong look at to make sure that we're not only taking

fire from Pakistan into Afghanistan where we have troops, but also that the platform of Pakistan is not used to plan another attack. And I think that's a significant decision by this government and I'm very supportive of it.

But one of the good news about you becoming secretary, Mr. Gates, was the fact that we began to change our policy, which had been an overreliance on the military, in my opinion, and too much hard power. We have to use all the levers of national power, and especially the influence of soft power.

Pakistan right now is in a significant economic crisis, a food crisis, a power crisis. And my concern is that the new government, both Prime Minister Gilani and the new president, Mr. Zardari, are facing so many different problems.

It's not just that they have a country that they've only governed about 70 percent of it, where we know perhaps Osama bin Laden is hiding and there's a lot of dangerous things going on, but they have an economic crisis; they have a internal displaced persons crisis. There's -- it's just a panoply of things.

Can you talk briefly about the soft-power opportunities that we have, the things that we should be doing to make sure that this new government, this very trying situation has all of the attention of the American government, not just our military, not just that part of it, but the other things that we should be doing?

SEC. GATES: Well, we are very fortunate in that the United States has an extraordinary ambassador in Islamabad, Ambassador Patterson. And I think she is doing an excellent job of making sure that different parts of the American government that can make a contribution to the Pakistani -- to the challenges in Pakistan are there. For example, the Treasury Department has been very much engaged with the Pakistanis in terms of their foreign currency reserves, things like that, and I think we have other elements of the government involved.

It really, often, is heavily dependent on the skills of the ambassador, in terms of making sure that the tools that we have available are, in fact, used.

I think one of the -- one of the concerns -- and we spoke about this with some of the members of the committee before this session. I think one of the -- one of the challenges is putting together a longer-range package of assistance for Pakistan on the civilian side, on economic assistance and developmental assistance and to help them address some of these issues. That's a multi-year package that they -- that they know that we are in this to help Pakistan over the long-term and it isn't just a relationship based on the military relationship that's focused on the border with Afghanistan, that it's much broader and has the interest of the Pakistani people in mind.

We won an enormous amount -- the American military won an amazing amount of support among the Pakistani people for the response that we provided after the terrible earthquake in Pakistan. But that reflected on the whole of the United States.

And a broader kind of assistance package that helps the Pakistani people, I think, not only would give their new government confidence that we have a long-range plan in mind in terms of partnering with them, but that it's multifaceted and it's not just focused on the -- on the military fight.

And I know there are some proposals here on the Hill in terms of doing some things like that, but I think it really bears serious attention.

REP. TAUSCHER: Admiral Mullen, you lead the finest military in the world, and thank you for your service, and to all the men and women that are in our military and their families that support them.

I assume that you would echo Secretary Gates' remarks that we need to have a comprehensive strategy and that part of this needs to be economic aid and stability and the civilian side of this.

ADM. MULLEN: I would. The only thing I'd add is -- and really for emphasis -- is it is the long-range commitment. We were not in Pakistan for 12 years because we sanctioned them. And that is part of what we've got to overcome in terms of whether they're going to believe we're going to be with them for the long haul or not.

REP. TAUSCHER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. SKELTON: Thank you so much.

Mr. Kline.

REP. JOHN KLINE (R-MN): (Off mike) -- all men (who wear the ?) uniform -- (off mike) --

REP. SKELTON: Mike.

MR./REP. : Microphone.

(Off-mike discussion, technical adjustments.)

REP. KLINE: (Off mike) -- solution. There. How's that? Is that better? Much better. I can tell.

I also want to congratulate you on the new command arrangement or hat arrangement, if you will, for General McKiernan. I think we'd talked about that earlier. I think that's a good move. And I want to associate myself with many of the comments of Ms. Tauscher when she talked about soft power. And certainly we had discussions about the relationship of Pakistan and how important that is, and counterinsurgency operations and the interagency effort, all of which are essential to succeeding in Afghanistan. But I also know -- I have it from a reliable -- I would say unimpeachable -- source in Afghanistan that, in his words, it's very kinetic there, and much more kinetic than Iraq, frankly. We're fighting a very tough enemy there, or enemies, in Iraq. These are pretty tough fighters, and it's a different kind of a fight that our forces and our allies are fighting in Afghanistan than we have been in Iraq, because of a different enemy.

And so a couple of things:

One, I know that the Marines are, from their perspective, in a pretty good position. They can sort of attack in any direction out of Kandahar.

And I know that there is a requirement -- we've talked about it here -- for more forces. And I have heard that the commandant of the Marine Corps is interested in the possibility of essentially pulling the Marines out of al

Anbar, where there is very little violence now, and concentrating in Afghanistan.

So to the extent that you can or are willing to comment on that, I'd like to hear your thoughts on that, more U.S. Marine forces in Afghanistan and fewer in Iraq.

And then, Mr. Secretary, you had talked about when you were here some months ago one of the issues that we've been dealing with in Afghanistan is a lack of air, lack of helicopters, and part of that support from our allies.

So, two pieces here. We've had some indication from you -- both of you today that our NATO allies are doing more. I'd like to hear a bit more about that, and particularly some of the issues regarding helicopters that we talked about earlier, and any thoughts you're willing to share on essentially moving the Marines from Iraq to Afghanistan.

SEC. GATES: Let me just take on a couple of pieces of that and then turn to the admiral.

First of all, I think the image, certainly from Afghanistan, is that it is principally a kinetic fight. In my view, this is another inadequacy of our soft power capabilities. As I said in some remarks some months ago, we're being out-communicated by a guy in a cave.

And the reality is you have 42 nations, countless NGOs, universities and others in Afghanistan building roads, helping with agricultural development, a variety of development projects, many schools have opened, and you've heard all the statistics about the clinics that have been opened, the schools that have been opened and so on. And frankly, we not only -- all of us involved, not just the United States, involved in Afghanistan, in helping them, have not done a nearly enough good -- nearly good enough job in communicating first of all to the Afghans, and then second, to the rest of the world, in fact what is going on in the non-kinetic part of the international assistance effort in Afghanistan, because it is an extraordinary effort by a huge array of countries and organizations.

With respect to the -- I'll let the admiral address the question about the Marines. But you had --

REP. KLINE: NATO allies, their ability to provide helicopters and forces.

SEC. GATES: With respect to the helicopters, the Canadians had some very significant needs if they were going to continue their presence in RC South. And that included some helicopters. And the Army I think did something very creative, and they basically did a deal where they let the Canadians have -- buy, I think, six helicopters that the Army was to receive that were at the front of the production line, and then they were going to go after -- they would pick up those helicopters further back in the production line. So there has been some increase in helicopters. There is still a shortage of helicopters.

The British and the French have put together an initiative in terms of trying to bring together the money for helicopters to retrofit some of the existing helicopters in Europe or to lease them from someplace else to send them to Afghanistan. And there are some millions of dollars in that fund put

together by the Brits and the French that other nations have joined in on. So they are making a significant effort to try and help us out on the helicopters.

REP. KLINE: Thank you.

REP. SKELTON: Thank the gentleman.

REP. KLINE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. SKELTON: Excuse me. Did you have a comment, Admiral?

ADM. MULLEN: I can give a very brief answer. Helicopters is the biggest shortfall we have, and it is very clearly supportive of the ISR effort in addition to the attack effort as well. And I see it everywhere. In Pakistan, you know, the helo force there, their helo force is yet another example. So we need more, generally speaking.

With respect to the Marines, General Conway is delighted the 2/7's going to get relieved by 3/8 and that the president made that decision. There have been no other decisions with respect to where the Marines will go. And conditions permitting and recommendations so supporting, that certainly could happen in the future. But it's not going to happen -- best I can tell, it's not going to happen in the very near future. REP. KLINE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. SKELTON: Thank you.

The gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Andrews.

REP. ROBERT ANDREWS (D-NJ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral Mullen, to you and the people you represent, thank you for a lifetime of service to our country.

We appreciate it very much.

And Mr. Secretary, thank you. I hope that whomever succeeds you reads very carefully your address at Kansas State and follows its admonitions. I think it was the best statement of defense posture for this country by any modern secretary of Defense. And I appreciate it very much.

I know that tomorrow the country will understandably be focused on the tragic events which took place seven years ago tomorrow. I'd like to focus on what took place eight years ago today and make an assessment.

Eight years ago today, Osama bin Laden and his followers were in the midst of planning and executing the September 11th attacks. And I think the metric by which we have to evaluate our collective efforts, since 9/11, is how much progress we have or have not made, we meaning the executive branch and the Congress, toward preventing another one.

My assessment is that the 9/11 attacks succeeded because bin Laden and his followers had four elements. They had leadership. They had logistics. They had money. And they had sanctuary, from which they could plan their attacks and execute them.

Obviously with respect to leadership, there has been some decapitation of al Qaeda's capabilities. But its leader, to the best of our knowledge, lives today, seven years later.

With respect to logistics, with respect to money and with respect to sanctuary, within the bounds of propriety, given the public forum in which we sit, Mr. Secretary, I'd like you to assess for us how much progress we've made in those areas.

If bin Laden were planning a second 9/11 this morning, where does he stand relative to where he was eight years ago with respect to logistical capabilities, financing capabilities and the ability to enjoy a sanctuary, be it in parts of Pakistan or Afghanistan? How are we doing?

SEC. GATES: Well, I think that, I think that the first fact that ought to be put on the table is that we are, in fact, seven years from September 11th. I was not in government. But I would tell that I don't think very many Americans on September 12th, 2001 would believe or would have believed or even dared hope that seven years later, there would not have been a single additional successful attack on the United States. And it's not for the lack of those guys trying, because we've caught too many of them and uncovered too many plots. So I think that sort of basic consideration has to be put on the table.

What you've described is basically the offensive side. There is the defensive side where, I think, there have been significant improvements, in terms of our own capabilities, intelligence, law enforcement, coordination and so on and so forth.

With respect to the specifics, as you mentioned, below the level of Osama bin Laden, there has been a significant degradation of the leadership.

A number of these people have been killed. They are -- they know that they are being hunted.

And with respect to logistics, I think that logistics and sanctuary in many respects go together. And that is that when they were able to plan 9/11, they not only had sanctuary, they had a partner in a government, and they had the assets of that government in terms of communications, logistics support, diplomatic relations with other countries and so on that they could draw on as a way to carry out their planning.

Similarly, they not only had -- while they had -- well, and they had -- and that obviously was a benefit of sanctuary as well.

While they have not been caught and while they are in something of a sanctuary in the western part of Pakistan, the reality is that they are on the move most of the time. Their ability to stay in place, to conduct training, to do the logistics; their ability to communicate with one another is dramatically impaired compared to seven years ago.

REP. ANDREWS: Right. Mr. Secretary, if I may, because my time's expiring, again, within the bounds of what's appropriate in a public forum, have we given you the tools that you need to finish the job and deal with Osama bin Laden?

SEC. GATES: I think we have the tools, yes, sir.

REP. ANDREWS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. SKELTON: Thank you very much.

Mr. Conaway.

REP. MICHAEL CONAWAY (R-TX): Thank you, Mr. Secretary, and I thank the chairman and Mr. -- Admiral Mullen.

The -- contrasting Iraq with Afghanistan from an economy standpoint, it's easy to see, with the resource -- natural resources that Iraq has, that you could have a very vibrant democracy there if you unleashed the economic power of that country.

On the other hand, Afghanistan has relatively limited natural resources, unless you consider rocks a natural resource. And I struggle with the idea that a democracy can be maintained in which the economy is -- some significant portion -- drug-related, and the corrosive effects that that have.

On several occasions I've asked questions that I've gotten -- not got very satisfactory answers to, maybe because there aren't satisfactory answers. But I think we've got the capability to deal with the tenant sharecropper or the tenant farmer who's being forced to grow poppies and manufacture opium as the payoff. That I don't know -- I can't get answered the impact that the Karzai government is having on everything above that -- the distribution chain, where the real money's being made. I think we can find cash crops for those tenant farmers and sharecroppers to grow, with the proper distribution system, that they could make a living. But you can't replace all that other wealth that's up the food chain that may -- it may involve drug lords and others.

The coordination between -- and you said earlier DOD has nothing to do with the drug interdiction or the fight against narcotics. In advising your successor and others in terms of how do we coordinate this fight -- because it is related -- the profits from the drug trade feed the folks who fight our guys.

And so there's, I think, enough of a nexus that a focused fight against that, with DOD and whoever, and not the stovepipe or silo chain of command that we have with respect to the fight against drugs and the fight against al Qaeda and Taliban -- what kind of advice are you going to give to your successors -- or successor with respect to this frustration that the ongoing drug impact has on this country?

SEC. GATES: Well, first of all, I think that we need to get the cooperation of our allies and the understanding that this is a problem and that it feeds many of the other problems that the alliance and our partners are addressing. It is -- from the Afghan side, it is in the first instance a matter of governance. And as I indicated, in a number of provinces where there was some poppy growing going on, the appointment of new governors and governance has led to some significant improvements. In the south, in the Regional Command South, Helmand province principally, it is a huge problem.

It seems to me that you don't get at this problem by going at the individual farmer. You go after the labs, you go after the distribution networks, and you go after the ringleaders, as it were. And I think that may require a much more coordinated law enforcement and investigative drug enforcement agency kind of activity. We need to further build Afghan

capabilities. They have some capability in this respect. They have trained up units for counternarcotics.

Another issue that -- and it goes straight to the governance issue -- is that clearly the narcotics crop feeds corruption. Corruption is, as you said, a corrosive -- has a corrosive impact. I would tell you those are exactly the words that I used with President Karzai the first time I met with him, in terms of the impact on the government.

So I would say -- I would say we probably need to find a way for ISAF and even the U.S. military to have -- perhaps have a greater role, but it's more in going after the labs and perhaps the distribution network. We don't want to be in the position of doing crop eradication. My view is, you do crop eradication without having money in a substitute crop right there, you've just recruited somebody else for the Taliban.

REP. CONAWAY: Right. Well, I sense, though, that there's still a big line of demarcation between those two, between DOD's capabilities in the field and DEA. Not for lack of trying, but just lack of jurisdiction. And you've restructured the command structure with General McKiernan to try to eliminate some of that stuff that was between ISAF and our guys. I'm not sure a better single commander who's in charge of that whole -- bringing that under McKiernan may be the answer or something else, but I sense a lack of coordination between the two fights, that are both well intended and trying to get the job done, but could -- may could do the job better together than they do separately.

Thank you, sir. And I yield back.

REP. SKELTON: Thank the gentleman.

I'm going to call on Mr. Marshall. And before I do, by prearrangement, the secretary and the admiral must leave at high noon, and they will be replaced by Vice Admiral James Winnefeld and also by Ambassador Edelman, which we appreciate you doing. And you will be able to stay until 1:00. Am I correct on that? (Response inaudible.)

But without taking any additional time, because I want you to get out of here right at high noon, I will ask your successors who testify about these CERP funds, which seem to be used in some interesting manners.

And I will do that at a later moment. But I just want to alert the two of you gentlemen about that.

Mr. Marshall. And you can clean up. And then we'll turn the gavel or turn the witnesses over.

REPRESENTATIVE JIM MARSHALL (D-GA): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you both for the leadership that you provide the great men and women who serve under you and serve us so well.

For some time now, at different hearings, I've raised the same question. And just curious to know whether or not any action has been taken, with regard to this particular question. So I've got this question and then a second.

First, with regard to Iraq, our history is one of being very effective at creating security forces. We've done this a number of times, I think, about 17 times just in the 20th century alone. And then more often than not, those security forces wind up taking over in one way or another, either as a result of leadership, from a charismatic private individual in the government, or because the head of the army just decides or the head of whoever just decides that the chaos is too much, the political disorder is hurting the country and consequently something must be done.

And so part of the thinking that, I think, we ought to be doing is how to coup-proof, coup d'etat-proof. How do we structure things? How do we help Iraq structure things, so it's less likely that that will occur, since everybody concedes that the civilian side of this is going to evolve much more slowly and much more chaotically than the military side?

And I'm wondering whether or not we are doing anything with regard to that. Are we planning it? Are we structuring it? Is it part of the SOFA conversations?

I had a conversation a couple weeks ago with the national security adviser. The Iraqi national security adviser raised this issue. He's actually concerned about it. So that's one question.

Second question: With regard to the PRTs, I visited my first PRT in Afghanistan with Pete Schoomaker in Christmas, I guess, 2003. And that was, I think, the only one we had at that time; Gardez. We've now got, I think, 28. We're not manning all of them but we've got, I think, 28 in Iraq. And they're structured, at least the American ones are structured, essentially the same way that Gardez was structured five years ago.

I know we're talking about changing the name. And I think that's great. Reconstruction assumes there was something there to start out with. And/or it assumes that what was there, to start out with, was desirable and we should reconstruct it, and so maybe provincial development teams. But beyond that, we ought to change the composition.

In five years, we could have had a PRT university in Kabul, training Afghans to do what Americans are now doing out there. It's less expensive for us, far less expensive for us. It actually accomplishes the objective more effectively because it's the reach of the Afghan government.

It looks more like the reach of the Afghan government than just Americans or Italians or whoever out there. And it's easier to do security-wise, since they are Afghan.

They're not -- they don't stick out like sore thumbs. And Afghans should be providing security and most of the -- of the other support in the PRTs. And I'm wondering whether or not we are moving in the direction of trying to make this pretty much an all-Afghan operation.

While I was there, I talked to a couple military officers who had as clerks Afghan doctors who chose to be typists for us because the pay is far better than what they can make as Afghan doctors. Well, pay them a little bit more than a clerk and send them out to the PRTs. Don't need translators, they can simply do the work without the sort of help that Americans need to have trying to do that job.

So those two questions --

SEC. GATES: Let me speak to it first and then ask Admiral Mullen.

First of all, in terms of the military, as you suggested, the Iraqi government is very mindful of their own history, of the history of Iraq and the military taking over. And while I think there's an ongoing debate about whether or not the decision to disband the Iraqi army was a good one back at the beginning of the war, it seems to me that one potentially salutary benefit of that was to break the cycle and the mind-set of those who had been in the Iraqi army that the army runs the country.

And so by basically starting from scratch, what I think has been interesting is the role of the Afghan -- of the Iraqi government in choosing their senior commanders -- the prime minister takes a personal role in this -- and certainly the partnering with us and the relationship with our officers and our experience in civilian control of the military.

I think that both the Iraqi military and the Iraqi civilians in government at the top levels of that government are appreciative of this problem and are taking steps to make sure that the Iraqi military knows its place in that society. And I would tell you on a day-to-day basis I believe that our commanders are basically teaching that lesson to the Iraqi commanders with whom they're working.

With respect to the PRTs, I would tell you it seems to me that if I had -- if looking back I identified a number of the issues that -- where I felt we needed to take action, where it was wounded warriors or MRAPs or ISR or some of these other issues, they became acute issues because few, if any, people expected either of these wars to go on so long. And so there was not a lot of long-term planning.

It seems to me that the notion that you have of how do you train people to participate in these PRTs is something we need to take under -- how you train indigenous people to do this job is important as we look forward and can anticipate other countries facing these kinds of developmental problems and how do we partner with them so that, at a minimum -- I'm not sure you can have an entirely indigenous PRT, but you can at least have an indigenous face on that PRT and you can have partnerships within that PRT with the locals, that I think is really critical.

And I think one of the things worth taking a serious look at is how you might build that civilian kind of capacity over time in those countries.

REP. SKELTON: High noon has come, and before you turn to pumpkins, we wish to thank you both for your excellent testimony, for your excellent service to our country. And we wish you success in the days ahead. And Mr. Secretary, it's a pleasure to have you. Admiral Mullen, thank you. It's a pleasure to have you here.

So if the two gentlemen would assume your seats, Ambassador Eric Edelman, undersecretary of Defense for Policy, and Vice Admiral James Winnefeld, the director of Strategic Plans and Policy for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. (Pause.)

It appears that Ms. Boyda is next on the list. Ms. Boyda, gentleman -- lady from Kansas.

REP. NANCY BOYDA (D-KS): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I had a -- Joe, Joe, Joe, Joe, can you move over a little bit? Thank you. Thank you very much. This seat.

I have a question. And I was very honored to be on the delegation with Chairwoman Tauscher just coming back from Afghanistan and Pakistan -- and one of the most purposeful and rewarding trips that I've come back with -- with, as you can well imagine, a renewed understanding of the importance of this region and the importance that we get it right.

And my question is -- we met with Gilani, the prime minister. We had great meetings. We met with Kayani, the general. And clearly, I think they get it, that they understand that getting control of this region on both sides of the Durand Line is important to us, and it's important to them. And so, as an American and a mom, and very, very worried that we don't have another 9/11-type event happen in our country ever, ever again, that was heartening.

Obviously, the economy in Pakistan is of huge importance to them, and so when it was my chance to speak with Gilani, and said -- Prime Minister Gilani -- and said, you know, I understand that you're dealing with a very, very difficult economy here; so am I in Kansas. I represent an area that the median income has gone down time and time again. We've seen it go down, not up.

And so this is a sensitive question that I'm going to be asking, but people want to understand what we're doing for accountability with the Pakistani government. And having been there, again, it's easy for me to say they do understand, they're in a very, very difficult situation themselves; and yet I need to be able to say the Pakistani government is working with us and this is what we're doing.

And we're spending a lot of money in Pakistan. We're certainly spending a lot of money in Afghanistan. But specifically -- and I see you shaking your head. I know you understand the question. And it's not an easy one. It's a nuanced question. But what am I supposed to tell people in Kansas about what accountability we are seeking with the Pakistani government with the billions of dollars that we're spending there? How do we -- I don't think we have held the Pakistani government accountable. It's difficult, but how are we going to do that in the future?

MR. EDELMAN: Congressman Boyda, I take it your question is largely focused on the coalition support funds that we have provided to the government of Pakistan over -- over time.

REP. BOYDA: Yes. Can you pull up to the microphone?

MR. EDELMAN: And those funds, as you know, are not an assistance program, they are a reimbursement program for the costs associated with, in the first instance, our operations.

REP. SKELTON: Could you get a little closer to the microphone, please.

MR. EDELMAN: Yes, sir. Can you hear me now?

REP. BOYDA: Thank you.

MR. EDELMAN: The coalition support fund is a reimbursement program that is meant to reimburse the Pakistanis for the cost of support in the first instance for our operations that began at the time of the operations in Afghanistan in 2001, 2002. Over time as the situation in the FATA became more critical, some of that money was also put to the use of supporting the Pakistani operations.

We have tried over the last few months to make this system both more user friendly to the Pakistanis as well as more accountable. You rightly raise the question of accountability. We screen first at the level of the Office of the Defense Representative in Pakistan, the requests for reimbursement that come in. They are then subjected to a second screening at CENTCOM. They are then screened yet a third time.

REP. BOYDA: Is this new or is this something that we've been doing?

MR. EDELMAN: That has been the process in the Office of the Comptroller in the Pentagon before payment is actually authorized. We have -- on the Pakistani side, by the way, they have had some complaints about the timeliness of our reimbursement, in part because we have held these things up to, I think, a fairly intense level of scrutiny. And if you'd like for the record, we could give you an answer that goes down into much more granularity and detail --

REP. BOYDA: Yes, sir, I would like it.

MR. EDELMAN: -- about the kinds of things that the coalition support fund has been used to fund, because we do have a fair amount of detail.

So we have tried to balance both the requirement for accountability and the, I think understandable, Pakistani interest in timeliness of reimbursement.

That has become more acute, the latter, for the government of Pakistan, because -- as you know, I was there in June. I think it's only more acute now. But the economy in Pakistan has gone from a period of 7, 8, 9 percent growth per annum to 0 percent growth over the last year because of the political turmoil; because of the unsettled situation in the FATA -- there's been a drying up of foreign direct investment; because they've been hit by increasing fuel and food costs, as other nations have; they've had their foreign currency reserves run down. So for them these payments are --

REP. BOYDA: Can I just ask one more --

MR. EDELMAN: -- these payments are quite important.

REP. BOYDA: Have there been ongoing -- with the new government that has been coming in, has this -- has this issue been raised with -- about increased accountability?

MR. EDELMAN: Yes, ma'am. I mean, this was a subject of discussion when I was there. And I also met with Prime Minister Gilani and with the defense minister and the other senior members of the government. It was also, you know, discussed by Secretary Gates with Prime Minister Gilani when the prime minister --

REP. BOYDA: Again, I understand it's a -- it's a very fine line, but it's one that we still need to continue to push.

Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

MR. EDELMAN: I don't think, Mrs. Boyda, that the authorities in Pakistan are any illusions that this is not an issue for us, but also for you and the members of the committee.

REP. BOYDA: Thank you.

REP. SKELTON: I mentioned to Secretary Gates a few moments ago that I would raise the issue of CERP funds.

The department's understanding of the allowed uses of CERP funds seems to have undergone a rather dramatic change since Congress first authorized it. The intent of the program was originally to meet urgent humanitarian needs in Iraq through small projects undertaken at the initiative of brigade and battalion commanders. Am I correct? MR. EDELMAN: Yes, sir.

REP. SKELTON: Thank you. Your answer was yes.

Last year the Department of Defense has used millions of CERP dollars to build hotels for foreign visitors, spent \$900,000 on a mural at the Baghdad International Airport and it's, as I understand, the second piece of art that CERP funds were used for.

I'm not sure that the American taxpayer would appreciate that, knowing full well that Iraq has a lot of money in the bank from oil revenues. And it is my understanding that Iraq has announced they're going to build the world's largest Ferris wheel. And if you have money to build the world's largest Ferris wheel, why are we funding murals and hotels with money that should be used by the local battalion commander? This falls in the purview of Plans & Policy, Ambassador.

MR. EDELMAN: No, it's -- no. That's absolutely right. And I'll share the stage here quite willingly with Admiral Winnefeld, with whom I've been actually involved in discussions, for some period of weeks, about how we provide some additional guidance to the field and additional requirements, to make sure that CERP is appropriately spent.

Let -- if I might, Mr. Chairman, let me first make some general observations and then get to some of the specifics, about the project that you -

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REP. SKELTON: Remember, you're talking to the American taxpayer.

MR. EDELMAN: Absolutely. And I think it's a fair question, because Iraq does have significant resources. It's only fair for both you and the American taxpayer, of whom I'm also one, by the way, to expect the Iraqis to, you know, to step up and pay for their own reconstruction.

The CERP authority remains very important, both in Iraq and Afghanistan, because it is a flexible authority that allows the tactical and operational commanders to execute projects that will help save lives, by smoothing out the situation in the area of operations. That's the first point I'd like to make.

I'd also like to make the point that in Afghanistan, this is absolutely crucial. Because as Secretary Gates said earlier in the hearing, unlike Iraq, where there are significant resources and there's a discussion to be had, about the appropriate division of labor and expenditure, in Afghanistan, the government has less than \$700 million in annual revenue. And the CERP money is absolutely crucial for our commanders in Afghanistan.

With regard to the specifics of the project that you mentioned, I think, there's an important contextual element to it. And then I'd like to mention some adjustments that we're making, in the department, to take all of this into account.

The first is that when the project that you mentioned was first undertaken, it was about 18 months ago. It was at the early stages of the surge. And General Odierno, General Petraeus were attempting to get the additional aviation brigade that we were putting into country, which was a crucial capability to have as part of the surge operation into Baghdad International Airport. It was an area that had been, the environs of which had been, controlled by Shi'a militias. It was extremely important to get that JAM element away from the airport, to be able to build public confidence, to be able to provide some employment.

The mural, for instance, that you mentioned, while I understand completely why it, you know, could appear to be an inappropriate use of the funds, can also, I think, be seen, in the actual context in which it was expended, as a jobs program, a local jobs program, to get people off the street and dry up the support for JAM around the airport.

The investment that was made, in that project, was a pump primer, if you will, for the government of Iraq to come forward with about \$45 million, in reconstruction projects, of its own in the BIAP area.

And over time, as a part of the discussion between the U.S. and the government of Iraq and the Iraqi authorities, it has developed -- it was part of the development of the beginning of what we now call ICERP, or Iraqi CERP. And I think the government of Iraq has put forward about \$300 million that they have been running through -- executed under our CERP program, but projects that they themselves have picked out.

I think as we move forward with the Iraqis, it is essential that they bear the bulk of the burden here, but I think while there are still gaps in ministerial capacity and ability to execute the spending of their budget, we do not want to take away from our commanders the flexibility to be able to do things in their areas of operations that will make it easier for them to operate and ultimately save American lives on the battlefields.

Let me ask if Admiral Winnefeld wants to -- (inaudible).

ADM. WINNEFELD: Yes, sir, just a few important points that I think ought to be made.

First of all, I think we should reassure the American taxpayer --

REP. SKELTON: Get a little closer.

ADM. WINNEFELD: We should reassure the American taxpayer that this money actually is being spent in our interest. As many of you have visited

Iraq, you know that this type of expenditure is an absolutely critical part of the counterinsurgency strategy, the approach that General Petraeus and his team have taken. I remember speaking to a young Army captain last year in Baghdad who told me that force protection is your relationship with the community. And I would tell you that CERP is an absolutely essential enabler for that type of relationship, building the kind of relationship with the community that these young captains and majors out in their combat outposts and so on are doing every day, day in and day out.

And while there may be dreamers in Baghdad who are thinking of building a large Ferris wheel, we still have to do the hot, tired and dirty work every day of bringing stability to that place. And CERP is an absolutely essential enabler.

I would point out a couple of numbers. One is that so far this year, 81 percent of the CERP expenditures have been on projects less than \$500,000. This has been money that's been put in the hands of young captains and first lieutenants and majors out on the street who are doing the kinds of things that are going to enable us to eventually bring them home, which I think is absolutely essential.

I also want to address the point that the Iraqis are making an effort to do this kind of work with us. Ambassador Edelman mentioned, I think, \$270 million in Iraqi CERP that we execute that is vetted through the Iraqis to make sure that we're doing the kinds of projects that they would agree with. But there are other sort of virtual CERP programs out there that I think represent Iraqi commitment to this program.

First of all, Iraq has said that they would like to raise their level of ICERP to two hundred and -- excuse me, \$750 million. There is also a \$550 million commitment the Iraqis have made for post-kinetic reconstruction operations in the five cities where they have gone out and taken the initiative to take control of their country. And I think that's a significant investment, and they've already executed \$280 million of that \$550 million. And on top of that, they have, I believe, \$75 million in small loans that they're giving to people, micro-type loans, which is exactly the kind of things that our young captains and first lieutenants are out there on the street doing.

So I would summarize by saying that while there have been some high-profile cases in the past, as Ambassador Edelman points out, if you look behind those high-profile cases, there's usually a reason that's there, and most of those high-expenditure cases have happened in the past. We have no projects over \$2 million that are currently on the books, and we are executing greater oversight, I believe, of that program, with the secretary involved.

And I have personally looked through the MNC-I and the ARCENT guidelines for execution of CERP, and I'm satisfied that they get it. And I think that I can tell you that the chairman, Admiral Mullen, is very, very high on the CERP program. He really wants to see it continue. And it's very important that we keep it going not only in Iraq, but in Afghanistan. And so we would ask for the committee's support, sir.

REP. SKELTON: The issue raises two serious questions, of course. Number one is, they have a lot of money of their own; and number two, the choice of the type of projects that are being paid for. I would like to ask, Mr. Secretary, if our committee could receive a list of expenditures of \$100,000 or

more within the last year. Would you do that for us at your convenience, please?

MR. EDELMAN: We'll work with our colleagues in the Comptroller's Office and with the Joint Staff to try and get you --

REP. SKELTON: That would be very, very helpful.

MR. EDELMAN: Mr. Chairman, if I might, I mentioned that I was going to say in my answer, but I neglected to include it, that Admiral Winnefeld and I have been talking. We're trying to balance attention between allowing on the one hand the folks in the field to have sufficient flexibility to be able to execute their mission, while at the same time providing a little closer oversight. And we're looking at trying to make sure that we have sufficient not only information about projects over a certain level, but also the requirements, what kind of monitoring they have in place and the kind of intended benefits that there are. And we're working our way -- we're not quite there yet, but we're working our way towards having some criteria that will allow us to have -- (inaudible) -- oversight there.

REP. SKELTON: That would be very helpful. When you make your decision on the criteria, why don't you forward that along with your list, would you, please?

MR. EDELMAN (?): Yes, sir.

REP. SKELTON: Roscoe Bartlett.

REP. ROSCOE BARTLETT (R-MD): Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman, I want to apologize for not being able to be here for much of the testimony and much of the question and answer, but I wanted to have an opportunity to address a concern I have that is probably not under the purview of our committee.

Afghanistan, of course, is a very poor country. I guess a fair percentage of their revenues come from agriculture and the biggest agriculture crop is poppies. Poppies are an interesting example of something very good and something very bad, because from poppies we get what I think is still the medical world's best painkiller, morphine. We also, regrettably, get a variant of that, heroin, which is one of the worst illicit drugs.

I know that one of our challenges is trying to replace poppy agriculture with some other agriculture. I just want to caution that Afghanistan is not the United States. If we encourage them to adopt our kind of agriculture, I don't think that that will work in Afghanistan.

Among the several things that I did in a former life, I was a dirt farmer, and so I understand a bit about agriculture. We brag that we have the most efficient agriculture in the world. That is true from one respect: We have more productivity per man hour than any other major country in the world. What that means is, of course, that we use horrendous amounts of energy to do that. In an increasingly energy deficient world, I don't think that's an agriculture that we should be exporting to poor countries.

One person in 50 in our country feeds more than the other 49 people because we have a fair amount of food to export. The agriculture we need to be encouraging in countries like Afghanistan is subsistence agriculture. We disdain that in this country, but I tell you sir, there -- sirs, there is --

there is virtue in labor. And people who are gainfully employed are probably not going to be terrorists.

And so I would hope that when we -- that we might get the Rodale Institute rather than our land-grant college to counsel the Afghans on the kind of agriculture that would be most beneficial to their country. Do you agree?

MR. EDELMAN: Congressman Bartlett, no, I don't disagree. I mean, obviously for any kind of alternative livelihood's effort to be successful in Afghanistan it's got to be agricultural techniques and products that are suitable both to the terrain that's being cultivated but also the traditions of agriculture that people have. While there may be some things that can be introduced from outside that may be helpful, it's got to be essentially consistent with local custom and practice to be taken up by people in the -- in the first instance.

I can't pretend to be an expert on that.

And if you'd like, we'd be happy to take, for the record, a question to get our colleagues in AID to get back to you, about what in fact is entailed in the Alternative Livelihoods Program.

REP. BARTLETT: I think that sustainable agriculture for the future is going to be increasingly that agriculture which has lesser BTU inputs and greater calorie outputs. If you look at that ratio in our agriculture, we have huge amounts of BTUs going in for relatively small amounts of calories coming out.

That was wonderful when we had oil at \$10 a barrel or less. That is not sustainable. And furthermore we need to employ as many people as we can, because unemployed people tend to become, particularly young men, tend to become terrorists.

I know this is a big challenge. And I would hope that, when we address this challenge, that we don't just presume that the agriculture that has made us the envy of the world, in the low-cost energy world, is the agriculture that necessarily should be exported to these other countries.

Thank you very much, sir, for your service.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

(Cross talk.)

REPRESENTATIVE SUSAN DAVIS (D-CA): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you both for being here. I heard the testimony from Secretary Gates earlier and Chief Mullen. I just wanted to appreciate the fact that you're here to follow up with some of us.

Could you talk a little bit more about the logistics issue? A recent article in the paper suggested that, in fact, the Iraqis do not really have the backup logistics that's needed, batteries even for example, that are needed for communication, the kind of airpower that they're -- the preparation for that kind of airpower.

How would you assess that? They're saying that it's just not getting to them because of corruption, whatever it may be. How do you judge that situation?

MR. EDELMAN: Ms. Davis, I think, we've known for some time, as we've been training the Iraqi security forces, that getting to the point where we had the enablers, the mobility, the logistics part was going to be coming at the latter part of this. So I think we're now in the process of beginning really to get into those issues, to enable them to perform more independently.

I would say that there, if you look at, for instance, the operation in Basra, when they went down, there were some initial difficulties that they had in executing that. But over time, they actually were able to move people and ultimately be able to supply them.

They need a little bit of help from us in that. But my sense is, and I defer to Admiral Winnefeld on this, is that as they've moved forward in other operations, they are getting better in all these areas, although there is still, I think, a long way to go for them to be certainly anywhere close to the kind of logistical support that we would provide.

REP. SUSAN DAVIS: I think -- go ahead.

ADM. WINNEFELD: I would just echo what Ambassador Edelman said.

You know, with 107 of 164 Iraqi battalions in the lead, and that's 164 that are in the fight and another 21, I believe, that are in training right now, they're on a very aggressive profile, to get training and equipment and the capacity to do the kinds of things that you would expect a regular U.S. Army battalion to do.

So I don't think it's unexpected that there would be issues, but I also know that the Multinational Security Transition Command, MNSTC- I, in Iraq is very sensitive to this. And they track how the various battalions are doing after they've transitioned out. We have mobile training teams that are with the various battalions out there. And we watch very closely and I think there is a good, healthy feedback system in -- when we find deficiencies, and we do the best we can to take care of them.

REP. SUSAN DAVIS: There just seemed to be that kind of confidence gap in what we were reporting and what they were seeing on the ground. And it's something that we obviously need to be very sensitive to.

Secretary Gates said that we're being out-communicated, essentially, by a guy in a cave earlier and I wonder if you could speak to our strategy -- our strategic communication strategy and what you feel needs to be done. I mean, Zawahiri was speaking in English to people in Pakistan suggesting that if they got involved with the Americans that obviously was going to be a problem. So how is -- I'm not sure if this is appropriate, necessarily, to you rather than Department of State, but what kind of pressures are you putting on to be sure that our communication strategy is a sound one?

MR. EDELMAN: Well, Mrs. Davis, again, you're correct. I mean, in terms of the government as a whole, Department of State oversees -- has the lead for communications. We have a new undersecretary for Public Diplomacy, Jim Glassman, who is bringing, I think, a good deal of energy to that effort.

And we in OSD work quite closely with him to provide support for the public diplomacy effort, which is, you know, largely our strategic communications effort overseas. Although we have lots of activity going on in the Department of Defense that, you know, is related to all this because it is supporting operations in the field, it's kind of --

REP. SUSAN DAVIS: Can you give it a grade at this time? I mean, how would you assess it --

MR. EDELMAN: Well, I -- you know, I don't think I'm any easier a grader than my boss. I don't think we've done very well in this -- you know, on this dimension. And we clearly have a long way to go. We suffer from a few weaknesses or -- but they're weaknesses that I don't think we would want to change, which is to say our enemies have the luxury of not having to tell the truth. We pay an extremely high price if we ever even make a slight error in putting forward the facts of a case. And so I think we do place a high premium on getting the facts, getting the information. And in today's modern world of electronic communication, where news moves instantaneously, we frequently find ourselves sort of, you know, catching up.

We also face some legal hurdles in terms of dealing with things like our adversary's use of the Internet, which is a sort of public domain and it's sometimes not that easy for us to operate, because sometimes these things are hosted in the United States of America.

So we face, I think, an awful lot of challenges and I think we've got a long way to go. I think -- in specific, in Afghanistan, we have made some changes in ISAF to try and provide greater support to the public effort, get a spokesperson out there.

But I -- you know, I would concede that I think we have a long way to go.

ADM. WINNEFELD: I would second that and say that it is one of the most if not THE most difficult thing that we do -- strategic communications. So it's a very insightful question.

And the doctrine folks inside the U.S. military realize this and are struggling with how we can train people to do this better and get that out into the field. At operational-level exercises, I've had two recently -- one under NATO and one under U.S. command, where it was very clear to me that there was huge emphasis on the -- from the trainers to the training audience that we have to do this better and to show us techniques on how to do it. And to do it right, you have to have deliberate messages. You have to have the ability to craft reactive messages. And you have to have a feedback mechanism coming back up from the chain to see if your messages are working or not.

And I would say that -- echoing what Ambassador Edelman says, is we are handicapped. One of the fundamental principles of fourth-generation warfare is that they will use our Western civilization freedoms and culture against us. And so what do we do when we have an incident on the ground? We want to make sure that we get the facts right before we put the facts out. And there's a built-in delay where you're vulnerable for somebody who doesn't have to get the facts right to beat you to the punch. And we struggle with this every day.

But I think I'd rather be on our side of it and get the facts, as best we can, and we still don't always get them right.

REP. SUSAN DAVIS: Yeah.

ADM. WINNEFELD: We've worked very hard at that time, but try as we might, it doesn't always happen.

I will tell you that General Dempsey has recently asked if ISAF and the ODRP in Pakistan and also CJTF-101 will come together to try to form some strategic communications cell, so we can do a better job of this.

And I think that bringing General McKiernan in, in a more overarching role, with the streamlined chain of -- change of command we're going to have, will only help that problem. REP. SUSAN DAVIS: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. SKELTON: Ms. Shea-Porter, please.

REP. CAROL SHEA-PORTER (D-NH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral, I had a comment. You said, when they were talking about the Ferris wheel and the mural, it could appear to be an inappropriate use of funds but actually was a jobs project. And when I think about jobs projects in a place like Iraq, I think about schools, health clinics, infrastructure. Could you explain why it would be more useful to build a mural than a school?

ADM. WINNEFELD: I would not tell that it's more useful to build a mural than a school. I will -- I'll only repeat what Ambassador Edelman -- the point that he made. And that is, I think behind some of these seemingly frivolous applications that there usually is an application that is trying to accomplish our objectives. And in this case, Jaish al-Mahdi had just been evicted, essentially, in a very hard-fought struggle --

REP. SHEA-PORTER: Okay, okay. Thank you. I only have five minutes, so I'm going to have to ask a series of questions. But I understand where you're going. But I think that the American public would feel a lot more comfortable if it gave jobs projects, if we had, to the Iraqis, and they built that. So we could still have the same psychological win by helping the people there.

But I am very concerned, as are my constituents and, I think, all Americans, about the cost and the taxpayer dollars that are going into Iraq. And I wanted to ask you a couple questions and also the ambassador.

First of all, who are we buying our fuel from right now for the U.S. military in Iraq? And how much are we paying?

ADM. WINNEFELD: I would have to take that question for the record, ma'am.

REP. SHEA-PORTER: Okay. I would appreciate if you'd get back to us on that.

And all the money missing that we have not had the oversight, and there's been, you know, money sent to Iraq missing, any idea what that figure is now? I've heard other numbers, but I wondered if you could.

MR. EDELMAN (?): I'm not sure specifically what part of the money you're talking about. There was an issue in the Ministry of Defense a few years back having to do with some contracts let to a third country that appeared to have had some corrupt element to it, which is one reason why we've moved increasingly to providing some of the military equipment that Iraq is purchasing with their own Iraqi money through our FMS system, which provides greater accountability and oversight.

REP. SHEA-PORTER: I recall about 6.9 billion (dollars), I think, that was under indictment right now for the lack of oversight.

ADM. WINNEFELD (?): In the Ministry of Defense?

REP. SHEA-PORTER: Well, actually in our own Department of Defense. We had a hearing on this, and there was money missing that, because they didn't do oversight, you know, was stolen from us.

ADM. WINNEFELD (?): This is the contracting, you're talking about the contracting --

REP. SHEA-PORTER: Yes, I'm talking about the contracting.

ADM. WINNEFELD (?): -- issue that General Kicklighter has been investigating and --

REP. SHEA-PORTER: Right.

ADM. WINNEFELD (?): -- subject to a Justice Department investigation.

REP. SHEA-PORTER: Right, and the fact that we had people in the Department of Defense tell us that they didn't have the accountants to do proper accounting, and I found that very, very disturbing. We also heard people from the Department of Defense come here and tell us that there were going to be Iraqi products on our shelves. This was a while back. That the factories would be coming on line and we would see that. And I wondered, is that happening?

ADM. WINNEFELD (?): I think that may have been my colleague in AT&L (sp) on the other side of the house, Paul Brinkley, who's been involved in doing that. And I'll have to take that for the record and get back to you.

REP. SHEA-PORTER: Okay, because I haven't seen the Iraqi products. I did see -- when I was in Iraq in March I was given a tray, and the tray was in Arabic on the front, but on the back was stamped all over it, "Made In China." And I also know that Iraq bought weapons from China. And my question to you is, is Iraq shopping in China instead of the United States?

And these are questions that are coming from Main Street, USA, wondering why our U.S. tax dollars are going there, and what Iraq is doing in terms of, you know, what they do with the money, and why can't we make the trays and why can't they purchase from us?

MR. EDELMAN (?): Well, I think the Iraqis are a sovereign country and obviously they can buy from whoever they want. It's in our interest, we believe, to have the Iraqi military have a close operational relationship with our military and be able to operate together with ours, and therefore, to purchase U.S. military goods and services. And that's one reason why we've encouraged them to use the FMS system. I think we've been fairly successful,

because they've put, I think, over -- close to \$3 billion, I think now, or maybe \$4 billion, into the FMS system. We can get you the exact amount. But --

REP. SHEA-PORTER: But I would like to point out -- you're right, they are a sovereign country, but you just said they can buy from whoever they wish. But I would submit that these are American dollars and we have robbed America's Main Street in order to pay for so many of these programs. And I don't think that they should just buy from whoever they wish. Perhaps they should have thought about the American taxpayers.

MR. EDELMAN: They can buy from whoever they wish, with money out of their national funds, not with our money.

REP. SHEA-PORTER: Their surplus and our deficit.

I obviously have great concerns about the spending there. And I think the Ferris wheel and the mural are small but significant comments about what went wrong in Iraq.

I thank you and I thank you for your service.

REP. SKELTON: Mr. Courtney.

REPRESENTATIVE JOE COURTNEY (D-CT): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, Ambassador Edelman, I just wanted to at least be on record complimenting Secretary Gates's announcement, at the end of his testimony, that the tanker decision has been put off for the next administration. Again I think the reasons he stated clearly show that he had the public interest in mind. And please convey to him, at least by hearsay, my compliments.

(Cross talk.)

Last April, when General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker made the rounds, before the House and Senate committees, Senator Biden asked sort of a point-blank question to Ambassador Crocker.

Mr. Ambassador, is al Qaeda a greater threat to U.S. interests in Iraq or in the Afghan-Pakistan border region? And Mr. Crocker's answer was, I would pick al Qaeda in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border area.

Again coming from the ambassador in Iraq, that's a pretty powerful statement. And listening to Admiral Mullen today, talking about the gravity of the situation in Afghanistan, I mean, the term that he used is that we are, quote, "running out of time," I'm trying to sort of get both of those sort of contextual statements in sync with the president's announcement that we are not going to -- we're going to send one Marine battalion in November, two months from now, and then an Army brigade in February.

I mean, are we moving too slowly? I just -- it's hard to see how, when we've identified the larger threat in one place, and time is of the essence, how that time frame works. MR. EDELMAN: Congressman, I would -- one thing I would say is that, first, Ryan Crocker is well situated to make that comment because he has not only been ambassador to Iraq. He has also been ambassador to Pakistan so he knows both sides of the equation.

I think frankly it would have been an interesting question, if you had asked him at the very beginning of his tour, whether he would have made the same statement then. I'm not sure he would have.

There was a period of time when, we knew, al Qaeda in Iraq was actively plotting against the homeland. There was a period of time when Zawahiri and bin Laden and others had said that Iraq was the central front, for them, in their struggle against infidels and crusaders.

I think that's changed over time, in part because of our success in Iraq, in degrading al Qaeda in Iraq, making them a less effective organization.

We have seen indication that they are now moving their efforts away from Iraq and towards Pakistan and Afghanistan. So some of that has been, I think, the inevitable adjustment that takes place in war between two, you know, contending adversaries.

REP. COURTNEY: I'll stipulate to that. I guess the question though is, you know, today in September, given the timeline that the president, I mean, that's really the question you have to figure out is, you know, are we doing what we need to do?

MR. EDELMAN: Well, first, I think, we have already been increasing, over the last couple of years, the number of troops we have in Afghanistan, both because we've increased the presence of the NATO allies in ISAF. I think we've got about 20,000 more troops total, in Afghanistan, today than we did two years ago.

That's before the president's announcements of the additional forces.

We started to make adjustments, as Secretary Gates, I think, said in his opening statement, in 2006 and 2007 as we dealt with the increase in violence and the recovery that the Taliban was making from the pretty significant defeat that had been inflicted on them in 2001, 2002.

Again, I think you need to pull back and put this into a larger, you know, historical context. In Afghanistan, as Secretary Gates has said on a couple of occasions, we've been engaged in a project that essentially is both countercultural and counterhistorical to Afghan experience.

We've created a central government there for the first time that's trying to extend its writ. As we've brought more -- as we've had more success politically with the first constitution, the first elected parliament, the first elected president, that has, of course, created a political circumstance in which the Taliban has not only had some time to recuperate but now has a greater incentive to try and disrupt that effort.

REP. COURTNEY: We're about to run out of time. And again, maybe we can follow up afterwards. But, you know, again, just looking at the weather and the fact that the winter is coming on and obviously, that's been a time for the Taliban to regroup and -- again, I'm just very concerned that this plan is -- really doesn't match up with the needs.

And you know, talking about the need to win hearts and minds with communication campaigns, I mean, relying on air strikes for security, I think, is the worst way for us to win hearts and minds. And clearly the collateral damage to civilians by not having enough boots on the ground in Afghanistan, I

mean, it has a spill-over in terms of the damage that we're doing to our public image there.

And I -- again, we can, as I said, maybe follow-up later.

MR. EDELMAN: (Off mike) -- agree with that.

REP. COURTNEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. SKELTON: Ms. Castor. REP. KATHY CASTOR (D-FL): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, gentlemen, very much for your service.

How do you intend to develop a robust strategy in Afghanistan against al Qaeda and the Taliban that involves the desperate need for additional soft power, resources, special operations personnel when the White House has had tunnel vision -- a tunnel vision focused on Iraq for years and years and years, now? All of the resources that the American people have put forward, the vast majority of them have gone to Iraq and not Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, the global threat to our national security seems to have hardened. It certainly -- the Taliban and al Qaeda and the extremist threat at the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan has regenerated. We're now facing our deadliest year in Afghanistan. Osama bin Laden is still out there. The strategic depth and readiness of our military has been degraded over the objections of many respected American military leaders in the chain of command.

And while Secretary Gates has been a breath of fresh air, he has had to spend a great deal of time prodding and pushing our allies, cajoling them to join our effort in Afghanistan, provide the resources that they really need to provide under NATO.

They've been turned off by the Bush-Cheney approach in Iraq, and that has had very severe consequences for American military personnel and the American people.

And now Admiral Mullen testifies today that the commanding officer in Afghanistan, General McKiernan, has now made a certain request for troops, and the Bush-Cheney administration is not able to meet that request. I'd like to know why hasn't the president and the vice president been willing or able to get our national security priorities straight, and go back to the original question: How do we develop a successful strategy in Afghanistan against al Qaeda and Taliban in the face of those challenges?

MR. EDELMAN: Well, Ms. Castor, I think, as the secretary said in his testimony, the challenges we face in Iraq and Afghanistan are somewhat different, both because of the composition of the adversary and the geopolitical circumstances of the two countries.

I think the administration's view has been that with the situation in Iraq in 2005, 2006, particularly in -- with the escalation of violence in 2006 and into the beginning of 2007, that not devoting attention to a country that sits on a lot of the world's oil reserves in the middle of a very volatile region was not an acceptable risk to take, which is why so much of the effort went to Iraq.

But that's not to say we weren't taking into account the challenges we faced in Afghanistan. As I said a moment ago, we in the last two years have pretty dramatically increased the number of troops.

REP. CASTOR: And yet, Mr. Ambassador, we're not able to meet even today the request of General McKiernan. After all of those resources and all of the troop levels, still today we still have about 150,000 troops in Iraq -- that's correct -- and the American troops in Iraq -- 19,000 and then we have -- I was trying to glean -- get the latest information from all the testimony -- 45,000 NATO troops, which includes about 15,000 American troops. So it's still that tunnel-vision approach, and I don't -- how do we develop the strategy going forward in Afghanistan if we cannot even meet General McKiernan's request, his express need, to address our national security situation in Afghanistan?

ADM. WINNEFELD: It's very clear that, first of all, there's been a balance of risk assessment against Iraq -- between Iraq and Afghanistan. And I think the secretary and the chairman made it very clear how they, on the advice of two military commanders in the field, a(n) overall regional commander, General Dempsey, the Joint Chiefs came together -- through a very transparent and healthy process, I would say -- to the conclusion that it was time to accept a little more risk in Iraq and move a brigade over into Afghanistan.

And that sounds like a very mechanical and easy thing to do, but it actually involves six months of training, and we really came up against the last minute for when we could determine that that unit could switch from going to Iraq to Afghanistan, because you have to train them for us, for completely different environments. So mechanically, it's not, perhaps, as easy as it sounds.

And I would tell you that regarding strategy in Afghanistan, the first thing I think that Admiral would reply is that you can't a strategy in Afghanistan without one in Pakistan.

And I believe, in his written if not verbal statement, he mentioned that he is, and we are, in the process of developing a comprehensive strategy, that would address both Afghanistan and Pakistan in the same context rather than looking at them in a stovepipe fashion which, I think, is a very healthy move.

And I can also assure you that, in the interagency dialogue that Ambassador Edelman and I each participate in, that there's a great deal of discussion about Afghanistan, probably more now than there is about Iraq.

So I think that we are shifting our center of gravity slowly but surely in that direction, based on the risk assessments of the commanders in the field.

REP. SKELTON: Ms. Giffords, please.

REPRESENTATIVE GABRIELLE GIFFORDS (D-AZ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I want to thank the panelists today for being here, hanging in there with the rest of us. I appreciate the opportunity.

I'm concerned, as we look to a post-9/11 world, how we are really preparing the men and women that are working to counter any sort of future terrorist attack -- the language skills, the cultural training, the historical training, all of that information which we understand to be really critical. Military skills are important. But the cultural awareness and the language proficiency, I think, are really key.

We've had a lot of people come before this committee and talk about the importance of this. And I'm very pleased to know that a lot of this training is happening at Fort Huachuca in my district. And we're proud of the training particularly in Arabic and Farsi. But unfortunately only about 3,500 regular Army officers were actually trained last year, among 500,000 active-duty personnel.

And so my question, which was for Secretary Gates, and he testified before this committee in February. He said that for all forces preparing for regular warfare, training and advising missions, humanitarian efforts and security and stabilizing operations, that language and cultural proficiency was essential.

So could someone please address what the Army is doing to fully train personnel this year, in respects to what was accomplished last year and as we move forward? MR. EDELMAN: Well, I'll let Admiral Winnefeld speak to the specifics. But just if I could make a couple of quick observations, Ms. Giffords, one, I agree particularly as a career Foreign Service officer that language and cultural skills are crucial.

I can give you one anecdotal piece of evidence which is that my son, who is a specialist in the Army, at Fort Lewis, has just completed 11 months of intensive Arabic training. And so I know from personal experience that we are doing a lot more.

My colleague David Chu, the undersecretary for Personnel and Readiness, has been overseeing an initiative department-wide to increase our facility and skill with languages. But I'll let Admiral Winnefeld talk to the specifics.

ADM. WINNEFELD: I think there's hardly a military officer out there today who would disagree with what you're saying. It's terribly important that we get better at this. And I can tell you from personal experience that, both on the positive side and the negative side, that language skills are extremely valuable.

My broken and limited French was very valuable to me in NATO. My extremely small smattering of Arabic was very useful to me when I was deployed to the Arabian Gulf. And I can tell you that our sailors and Marines that occasionally deploy down to West Africa could certainly benefit from an understanding of Portuguese, in some of the countries down there that speak Portuguese, and certainly French and the like.

So there's not question that it's a very, very important skill that we need to get better at.

In terms of being able to specifically -- give you exact specifics of what the Army and the other services, for that matter, are doing, I know the will is there and I know that we are doing more and I believe that either this afternoon or yesterday our director for Manpower on the Joint Staff, General Patton, is up on the Hill speaking to -- I thought it was the HASC but it may be the SASC on exactly this issue. So we do have a rich bit of information we can get to you, and I'd like to offer to provide that to you for the record.

REP. GIFFORDS: I think we'd appreciate seeing that.

As I look to the transition which happens between Iraq and Afghanistan, I realize as well that there's some core languages, from Dari to Pashto, Uzbek, Turkmen that are not included in the cultural and the language training -- and that's just with the language side. There's also a cultural component that goes with that. So I'm curious whether or not, as you all work towards transitioning -- are there plans in place to incorporate these other additional languages?

MR. WINNEFELD: I believe there are, but I would want to again refer to the record because our Manpower and Personnel director is going to be talking about that this week on the Hill. It's a very good question and I believe he's got some good answers.

REP. GIFFORDS: Yes.

MR. EDELMAN: Ms. Giffords, if I could just add one thing, which is I think that above and beyond the requirement for training, there's a broader issue for the nation, which is sort of our kind of intellectual capital in a lot of these areas, that is to say in language and in the cultural awareness.

I think you know, probably, about the Human Terrain Project, which we have ongoing, which helps bring to bear some outside academic expertise, but it's hard to come by because there are some disciplines in the academy where people feel a little bit uncomfortable about working with the U.S. military. The secretary's been trying to deal with that by the Minerva Initiative that he has announced, which is a partnership -- a public-private partnership between the department and universities to try and stimulate research in areas that are of interest and future importance to the department and in languages like Chinese and Arabic that are particularly difficult and require a lot of time and investment -- personal investment to learn.

So that's, I think, an ongoing challenge for the nation, much as Russian was during the Cold War era.

REP. GIFFORDS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. SKELTON: Mr. Taylor, the gentleman from Mississippi.

REP. GENE TAYLOR (D-MS): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank you gentlemen for being here for three hours.

A few questions -- hopefully we can answer it now, or if not, I would like for the record. The Sons of Iraq program, at what point does the Iraqi government start paying that bill and what assurances do we have that that's going to happen and that these people who are used to getting \$300 a month don't one month not get paid and decide to start shooting at Americans again?

MR. EDELMAN: It's a good question, Congressman Taylor, and I can give you the answer. I believe that it was just yesterday or the day before, Prime Minister Maliki signed a decree. They are taking over the responsibility on October 1 for all the Sons of Iraq and the first payday, I believe, is supposed to be the 1st of November.

REP. TAYLOR: Okay.

AMB. WINNEFELD (?): Can I do -- just to add, I think it's a phased program. My recollection is that they're going to start in Baghdad with about

54,000, and they will be drawn into the Iraqi army pay system and then it will be decided the disposition of sending them to vocational training or actually inducting them into the Iraqi security forces. And then as the program matures, we see if it's actually executed, which is an excellent question, further on down the line inducting the others into the same system. So it will be a phased program, but they have committed to doing it. And we certainly are hopeful that it will happen.

REP. TAYLOR: Second question is, it is my hunch, but I certainly would seek your guidance, that we're not paying rent for things like Camp Victory, that we're not paying rent on the Water Palace, that we're not paying rent on any of our installations. I would think it's just the determination our government made that we have conquered this nation and for the time being we're going to take these places.

Using that analogy -- again, correct me if I'm wrong -- but using that analogy, in that a huge expense of the war in Iraq is fuel, and that up until around Easter of '05 the Kuwaitis were footing the bill for the fuel, and sometime in that time frame, they started charging us, giving us some fuel and charging us some -- again, they've been great partners in this and so I can understand their need for some revenue. But to what extent do you, Mr. Ambassador, tell the Iraqis that one of the greatest contributions they can make towards this effort is something that they have in abundance that happens to be very expensive to the American military, and that is their fuel?

MR. EDELMAN: I think it was Ms. Shea-Porter asked the question about the fuel, and we'll get back to you, Mr. Taylor, with all the details on that. I don't have them for you right now.

REP. TAYLOR: As a further follow-up to Ms. Shea-Porter's question, I'd be curious what percentage of the fuel is actually purchased in Iraq, what percentage of it comes from Kuwait and other places.

MR. EDELMAN: Yeah, I think there's still quite a bit that comes from Kuwait. ADM. WINNEFELD: And I think it has to come from -- largely from outside the country because of Iraq's limitations on their refining capacity.

REP. TAYLOR: Well, sir, it's my understanding the Iraqis had about a \$80 billion surplus this year, mostly from the export of oil. So again, I think it's a fair question.

ADM. WINNEFELD: (Inaudible) -- the difference between the question is paying for it and actually producing it. And we've taken for the record the paying-for question, but I think in terms of producing it, they just don't have the refining capacity.

REP. TAYLOR: Okay. Well, again, they could contribute funds towards fuel.

Third one, Admiral, and this is within military, for the 19 years I've been lucky enough to serve on this committee, I've heard the expression "we train as we fight." We train as we fight. One of the important programs that this committee has taken the lead on funding was the mine-resistant vehicles. And somewhere about now, we ought to have about 12,000 of them in theater, with several thousand more on the way.

It's my understanding that almost none of our training installations have sufficient MRAPs for the soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines to actually train on before they get to Iraq; that the first time that most people see an MRAP is in Kuwait just days before they're going to cross the berm and be in a real war zone.

What is the timeline to get MRAPs in sufficient numbers to places like Camp Shelby, Fort Hood, the big base in Louisiana? I understand there are some at the National Training Center, but a fairly small percentage of the troops actually cycle through the National Training Center before they get to Iraq. So what's the goal to have sufficient number of MRAPs at the training installations to where they become a part of the training regimen?

ADM. WINNEFELD: It's a very good question. I think the initial priority, of course, has to be to get them to Iraq.

REP. TAYLOR: I understand. But we are getting to the point now where the manufacturers are saying, hey, I don't enough work, which tells me that they have the capacity to build enough to get to the training installations.

ADM. WINNEFELD: Intuitively I would tell you that that's going to eventually happen, once we fill out our needs not only in Iraq but elsewhere. And I would like to take that for the record because, I know, we can give you an answer on that.

REP. TAYLOR: And when should I expect an answer on that one?

ADM. WINNEFELD: I think we can get that to you very quickly, sir.

REP. TAYLOR: A week?

ADM. WINNEFELD: Yes, sir. (Off mike.)

REP. TAYLOR: Okay, thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. SKELTON: Thank you so much.

The witching hour has come, and Mr. Spratt has a follow-up.

REP. SPRATT: This issue has been touched upon, but I'd like to put it to you for a direct response.

The stated purpose of the surge was to open up a window of opportunity for the civil government, the Maliki government, to work out an agenda of reconciliation items basically among other things assuring the Sunnis of accommodation, within the polity and government and economy of Iraq.

It now appears that the Maliki government is hell-bent upon disbanding the Sons of Iraq, some hundred-thousand of them, who were playing a key role in the surge, without effectively assuring them of employment, either in the government or in the military or elsewhere in the economy, or giving them any kind of transition. And even worse, some suspect that they may be arrested and some are being investigated. It's not a good turn of affairs.

Would you please describe for us what State Department and Pentagon propose to do to prevent this potential situation, which could be -- could reverse the gains that have been achieved in the surge? MR. EDELMAN: Congressman Spratt, I think Admiral Winnefeld and I, a minute ago, addressed, to Congressman Taylor's question, a response that indicated that the Maliki government has signed a decree and is taking over the management, of the Sons of Iraq, as of October 1; first pay date, November 1. There has already been, I think, some 20,000 who have already been employed in the security services. Others have been given other jobs.

I think there is concern, and I think it's a concern that underpins your question, about some events that took place in Diyala a couple of weeks back which is, I think, a good cause for concern. But overall I think the prime minister has in fact reached out to his Sunni colleagues.

The Tawafuq bloc has come back into the government. He has actually worked quite well, given past history, with Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi. So while it's a concern that we continue to monitor and watch, and I can promise you that General Petraeus and soon General Odierno pay very close attention to this, I think right now we at least for the moment appear to be on a positive trajectory.

MR. EDELMAN: Yes, sir. And I would only add that whatever we could pull the string on for those incidents, I think, that caused concern over the last week or so were -- they were isolated. They were reported in the Arab press, which tends to want to foam that concern about that. And it wouldn't be Iraq if there were not concern over whether this is going to actually pan out. But the Maliki --

REP. SPRATT: Are you, too, testifying that this matter is being resolved, worked out; it's being addressed and --

MR. EDELMAN: It's our understanding that the Maliki government has committed to doing this and that they will either induct them into the Iraqi service -- security forces or provide some kind of vocational training or some other mechanism. But our understanding at the moment is that they have committed over the -- over the course of time to assuming responsibility for the Sons of Iraq, including paying them.

REP. SKELTON: I thank the gentleman.

And Ambassador, Admiral, thank you so much for your testimony. And we have four votes pending upon that and upon -- thank you again.

(Strikes gavel.) We're adjourned. END.