

Ambassador Ishaq Shahryar
Remarks To the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
February 12, 2003

“The Restoration and Rebuilding of Afghanistan”

It is a great honor and to be with you today and to share some thoughts about an important, perhaps even vital, work in progress in Afghanistan.

Given the heroic investment of American dollars and American lives in the liberation and rebuilding of Afghanistan it is most appropriate that you have a progress report direct from the beneficiary.

And that is what I will provide here today -- with the overarching theme that America's investments in Afghanistan are commensurate with the returns -- returns that can be measured in terms of, eliminating the scourge of terrorism, enhanced regional and global security -- and with enhanced security comes enhanced economic growth.

I wish to thank you, Chairman Lugar, for the invitation to present testimony this morning, and to thank you personally for your thoughtful vision of what Afghanistan can become, and your support for an Afghan Enterprise fund -- that will be critical for our journey and arrival.

I also wish to thank you, Senator Biden -- for your consistent voice of support through our early months of liberation and rebuilding -- and for your particular focus on the plight of women in Afghanistan.

I believe there can be redemption through suffering. And perhaps the greatest and most lasting redemption thorough this entire saga may come to pass for the women of the world. When the world began to see full force --the systematic brutalization and discrimination against the women of Afghanistan by the Taliban gangsters -- I believe that leaders of the world and in this chamber resolved to mount a renewed effort to end all forms of discrimination against all women in all nations of the world.

And I also wish to thank you, Senator Hagel, for your leadership in sponsoring the Afghanistan Freedom Support Act authorizing \$3.3 billion in economic, political, humanitarian and security assistance for Afghanistan during the next four years.

And while I have the microphone, on behalf of President Karzai and the Afghan people I wish to thank the members of this Committee, the members of the U.S. Senate and the House, Secretaries Powell and Rumsfeld, their senior staff, and of course President Bush -- for liberation.

We are a country the size of Texas and we have a great deal to be thankful for. We are a grateful nation -- thanking the world's most generous nation. My words of gratitude would still be insufficient if I spend my entire allotted time thanking the long list of Americans who have embraced Afghanistan -- workers from our government agencies, NGOs and private companies.

But instead, I would prefer to turn to the actions and plans in place and going forward that will bring lasting and positive change to the region -- and best represent the gratitude of the Afghan people.

I am new to the diplomacy business. My residence and professional experience of the last 45 years has been centered in Southern California -- where I have been taking English lessons. So I trust there will be no need for translation.

I would like to begin my remarks with a simple observation -- and to present and context for this hearing.

The observation: The Official Name of my Country, as indicated on our passports is:

"The Transitional Islamic Republic of Afghanistan"

"Transition" -- is a key phrase and umbrella theme for my remarks this morning. We are a work in progress -- and in a context.

And the context is this: Two decades ago a very bright professor named Brezinski, referred to our region in the Middle East -- the north and west side of the great mountains that divide Asia from Europe -- As the "Arch of Instability."

But in recent years -- without question, that arch has become a Circle of Instability -- matched by an arch that extends across the southern and eastern side of the mountainous continental fence -- and includes Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and even as far as Indonesia.

At the center of this circle -- is Afghanistan. Afghanistan is at the center of today's "Circle of Instability."

But this is not new. It is history repeating itself. For 4,000 years, Afghanistan has been a "portal" for history...more than just a crossroads...a portal.

For most of human history, travel from Europe or the Middle East to Asia could only pass one way - - through Afghanistan -- and through the Kyber Pass.

Ghengis Kahn, Tamerlane, Alexander the Great, to name a few -- crossed Afghanistan and left their mark on Afghan government, arts and sciences.

Others, of course entered and occupied Afghanistan as well -- but left behind only destruction and chaos. In our generation, it was the Soviets in the 1980s, and the Taliban of the 1990s.

I offer this brief history lesson -- to suggest the following:

Afghanistan is literally the "**high ground**" of history.

Control the Afghanistan high ground, and you will **influence for good or for evil** -- that which flows into Europe and into Asia.

If the Western World has a lapse of attention and turns elsewhere, the "**institutional memory**" of **the region will leach back in to a weak Afghanistan** with drugs, corruption, and terror -- and invariably -- "the circle" will turn back toward terror and conflict.

If the Western World sustains support -- and stays focused and present until democracy and prosperity are firmly rooted -- then Afghanistan will become a hub -- a hub of wheel of regional stability, democracy and prosperity -- that will become self-sustaining.

This is not theory -- it is a replay of another recent and successful deployment of U.S. and international will on a smaller scale -- where foresight was acted upon -- indeed the foresight of this Committee was acted upon -- and conflict on a broad scale was essentially prevented.

I invite you to compare the regional geopolitical situation of land-locked, impoverished -- but historically very significant Afghanistan in the Middle East and Asia -- to that of land-locked, impoverished -- but very historically significant -- Macedonia -- in the Balkans.

As you know from history -- Macedonia in many ways is the historic portal that connects Europe and the Middle East -- in the same way that Afghanistan is the portal that connects Asia and the Middle-east.

There, for the first time in history -- The U.S. and NATO -- very smartly -- put a military presence in Macedonia BEFORE conflict spilled into that historic tinderbox.

Yes, there have been minor flashes of conflict in Macedonia -- as flashes of conflict continue today in Afghanistan. But that historic "Center of Balkan instability" was made secure and regional conflict was avoided -- a conflict that might have brought two NATO powers to blows.

The analogy of that successful -- and modest investment -- holds for Afghanistan and the current Circle of Instability in the Middle East.

Consider the following comment from Ahmed Rashid writing in the Far Eastern Economic Review in an article titled:

A Desire To Be Left Alone -- with a tagline:

Afghanistan's power-hungry neighbors threaten to revive the ruinous civil war of the early 1990s that gave rise to the Taliban

"Russia is arming one warlord, Iran another. Wealthy Saudis have resumed funding Islamic extremists and some Central Asian Republics are backing their ethnic allies. India and Pakistan are playing out an intense rivalry as they secretly back opposing forces. The playing field is Afghanistan, and the interference threatens to revive a multifaceted power struggle that in the early 1990s eventually gave way to a near-ruinous rule by the Taliban."

This is pretty straight talk.

It doesn't get more concise in describing the cycle of the 1990s -- and what could re-emerge -- OR -- can clearly be prevented if the U.S. and world community remain invested in the security and rebuilding of Afghanistan.

Perhaps it is a stretch to ever envision Afghanistan as a "Switzerland of the Middle East." But I find it useful to think in those terms.

We must begin with the premise that Afghanistan, like every other sovereign nation -- is for the Afghan people -- AND NOT the playing field for regional rivalries. And we must begin with this premise and hold firmly to it.

The institutional memory in the region that reaches back 4,000 years. And regrettably that institutional memory favors dictatorship over democracy -- and economic suppression over economic prosperity.

And the bad habits that go with that history include devoting resources to developing nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons to enforce repression -- at the expense of economic opportunity and prosperity for people.

Look at Iran and Iraq -- two countries blessed with immense petroleum wealth -- where people live in poverty.

Repression is a medieval concept -- that does not belong in the 21st century.

- The denial of personal liberty removes transparency in government that leads to corruption.
- Corruption repels investment and economic development.
- Poverty is the soil where terrorism takes root -- and makes the whole process of democracy, stability, and security impossible.

Now -- I know that I am preaching to the choir here.

These concepts are second nature to you. But there are novel -- if not radical concepts to the 100s of millions of people in the Middle East and South Asia.

I have heard some say that openness and democracy conflict with our Middle Eastern culture and tradition.

Nonsense.

It was Cyrus the Great of Persia who issued the world's first secular declaration of human rights.

Yes, there have been periods of greatness in the Middle East. But to date, the ancient cultures have failed to translate themselves into modern times, because there has been no one to lead beyond the past -- with the knowledge and convictions that --

- Theocracies fail;
- Dictatorships fail; but
- Democracy -- somewhat more cumbersome to implement -- works.

But I believe, however, that the cycle of history in Afghanistan is being broken by leadership with a new vision.

The people of Afghanistan have rallied to President Hamid Karzai as the one person who is truly able to unify Afghanistan, and turn the nation from a past filled with war and repression -- to a future focused on prosperity and democracy.

We began our future with liberation -- and with the restoration of our spirit. For a country that has literally been reduced to rubble -- it is our creative spirit and our culture that anchors our new beginning.

To be frank -- there is little else in our country that will hold an anchor.

With liberation -- we've had the opportunity to reclaim our culture -- our art, our music, our educational systems, our entrepreneurship -- our freedom to create was given back to us. The grays and blacks imposed on us by the Taliban -- are being replaced by color.

- Our men can again play music.
- Our women and girls are returning to schools.
- And our children can again fly kites.

You've seen these things on CNN. You also know that we have a long way to go:

- 1 in 5 children born today will not reach the age of 5 years;
- 1 in 10 Afghan women will die in childbirth-- leaving her other children as orphans;
- Of Afghanistan's 27 million people -- the United Nations estimates nearly a quarter are refugees; and
- Afghanistan is the most heavily minded country in the world. And as is the case in other war zones -- children at play, will become the victims of left-over land mines.

Addressing the humanitarian issues, the security issues, the rebuilding issues, and the economic development issues are not simple.

It has meant an international collaborative effort -- and to date, this multi-national collaboration is working -- and working better than perhaps any comparable effort since the Marshall Plan.

Rebuilding -- Cultural and Tangible

We have a rare and historic opportunity in Afghanistan -- to change the course of a region that has triggered substantial global turmoil for the last generation, and been the focus of U.S. foreign policy for the last 18 months -- and I dare say will be for the next 18 months.

With respect to Re-building and Security Concerns I would like to briefly describe:

- Where we have been;
- The works in progress being crafted with the tools at our disposal focusing on security and reconstruction;
- Where we can go -- according to a rather urgent timeline.

The Last 12 Months

In many ways Afghanistan still lingers in a honeymoon period -- where we are designing and building a new nation from a clean sheet of paper.

In the immediate post-Taliban defeat in Afghanistan, there were no universities, no army, no police, no TV, no newspaper, no banking system, no judiciary, very little food and even less way of health care. The only thing in abundance: Guns and land mines.

Looking back 12 months -- we established a triage plan to urgently fill institutional vacuums . It began with the Bonn Agreement that provided the political road map and an interim administration to make a start. We then quickly moved to right the most egregious wrongs of the Taliban.

- All women workers and students were immediately restored to their pre-Taliban positions. Today, women constitute over 50% of civil servants and teachers.
- Some three million children have gone back to school.
- His Majesty King Zahir Shah returned to Afghanistan after almost three decades.
- The Grand Decision Making Assembly known as the Loya Jirga was convened and 1501 representatives from all over Afghanistan participated. And a woman was a candidate for Presidency.
- Over two million refugees from outside and internally displaced have gone back to their homes and villages.
- Liberal investment laws were passed to attract foreign and Afghan investors and free enterprise has re-gained a foothold.
- All state enterprises have become subject to open bidding.
- A neighborly conference was held in Kabul on the anniversary of Bonn Conference to mark our neighbors' commitment to non-interference, good neighborliness and mutual respect. This has resulted in the Kabul Declaration.
- National Defense Council, National Security Council, Civil Affairs Commission, Human Rights Commission, Constitutional Commission and many other entities have been established to speed up the work of the government.
- A Constitutional Commission was established, drafting began, and is now nearly completed. By the end of the year it will be completed and ratified by another Loya Jirga.
- And just like here in the United States, in 2004, we will again hold free and fair general elections.

Those were tangible acts of immediate need. There have also been needs to lay foundations for Cultural Reconstruction -- the re-establishment of a national sense of identity -- and providing an education to the Afghan people -- both of which are critical to ending factionalism of the sort that plagued Afghanistan in the aftermath of the Soviet defeat and withdrawal.

You see, for over 20 years the Afghan people have endured two attempts at brain-washing. First by the brutal far-left extremes of communism. Then by the brutal far-right extremes of the Taliban's "Thug Theocracy."

Is it any wonder the brains of our young people are scrambled.

For years, the moral compass of the nation has been spinning like a top.

We need to remind the adults of Afghanistan who they are, where they have been.

And at the same time we are telling our children -- that their entire lives, all that they have known for 20 years -- is an aberration. That in the 21st Century -- Open societies, freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of commerce, freedom from want, fear and intimidation -- are the models for Civil Society -- and where the world is going.

To that end:

- We will hold fast to secular government.
- Work urgently to restore our libraries, our museums, our cultural monuments, and our national parks
- We must also encourage the direction where the invisible hand of freedom has already led us -- the creation of free and independent media. Indeed, there are already 150 new News Organizations in Kabul, and Kabul Radio is now up 24 X 7 and broadcasting to a national audience.
- We are working hard to create a Judiciary System--that is transparent, based on the rule of law and representative of the entire nation. To that end our new Judiciary Commission and Commission on Human Rights have been hard at work, and I am pleased to day that 200 women Judges have been restored to the bench.

I think we have made great progress. Here is the testimony of Robert Oakley, former U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan in a recent Op-ed from the Washington Post:

“Starting from zero a year ago, the administration of President Hamid Karzai has achieved many attributes of a responsible government.

- It has a long-term national development framework and budget, worked out with the World Bank, the United Nations, the United States and other donors, and is carefully applying it to ensure that donor proposals meet Afghan realities.
- A central bank, fiscal discipline and a new national currency have been established.
- Construction of the large-scale Ring Road program has begun; large-scale community development projects will soon follow smaller efforts.
- An Afghan Defense Commission (including senior "warlords") has reached agreement on the size, makeup and training of the new army and the demobilization of local militias.”

Ambassador Oakley goes on to say what I firmly believe:

The key to this trend line continuing in a positive direction – is the continued presence and focused attention of the United States of America.

The American effort has already been heroic, creative, and generous.

Consider, just in recent months:

- the Congress and Administration produced the \$3.3 billion Afghan Freedom Support Act;
- Secretary Powell unveiled the Administration’s U.S.-Middle East Partnership Plan; and
- the President dispatched of a special delegation of American women to Kabul under the auspices of U.S.-Afghan Women’s Council.

But this trend line of attention and active support must continue into 2003.

If it does -- and I believe it will -- the good news will continue and Afghanistan will become the first example in this new century and centuries to come -- of what democracy can do for a struggling nation.

Aid and Reconstruction

Last year began with \$5 billion being pledged for the reconstruction of Afghanistan, including \$1.8 billion for 2002, at the January 2002 Donor Conference in Tokyo. An additional \$1.2 billion has been pledged for 2003. Although many major reconstruction projects had begun towards the end of the year, the majority of our population is living in poverty, below the pre-war 1976 levels in many cases.

The Loya Jirga that was held last June helped to spur activity on a numbers of projects, including small scale initial recovery efforts, macro-reconstruction projects such as roads, energy and power, many of which were supported by funds channeled through UN agencies.

But, as Nigel Fisher, the UN Secretary General's Deputy Special Representative for Reconstruction, noted:

"Tokyo pledges have largely been met, but the fundamental problem is that those pledges fall far short of the level of international assistance required to really kick-start Afghanistan's recovery. In per capita terms, the assistance provided to Afghanistan falls far short of aid provided for recovery from other major crises -- in the Balkans, East Timor or Rwanda."

What's more, for the pledges that have not been met, checks are still in the mail, grants have been converted to loans, and many loans have become conditional or placed on hold.

The softening of global commitments to rebuild Afghanistan makes the U.S. commitment -- as declared in last fall's Afghanistan Freedom Support Act -- all the more important.

Our needs, living at the center of the "C ircle of Instability -- remain most urgent and we require significant financial support.

The landmark **Afghanistan Freedom Support Act** -- that originated in this Committee provides a strategic framework for U.S. policy on the political and economic development of Afghanistan -- to provide that support.

- It protects and enhances the security of Afghanistan by authorizing military and security assistance, and supports counter-narcotics, crime control and police training activities for our government.
- The legislation also authorizes \$1.7 billion in economic, humanitarian and development assistance in Afghanistan.
- Through the efforts of Members of this distinguished panel, \$300 million was provided for an Enterprise Fund to promote job creation and private sector development, and another
- \$300 million in draw-down authority for military and other security assistance is authorized.
- The bill also provides a total of \$1 billion to support ISAF, if the President makes the necessary determinations.

We respectfully urge the Congress, in this appropriations cycle to fully fund the **Afghanistan Freedom Support Act**.

The Act created a template for reconstruction funding at not less than \$450 million in fiscal year 2003. The need is urgent. Yet, the FY 2003 Omnibus Budget looks like it will fall considerably short of the mark. I would urge you and your colleagues to bring the actual funding level up to the authorization mark so that funds can be deployed – not next year, but in the months ahead – to enhance education, improve health, especially for children, to strengthen our democratic institutions and to empower the women of Afghanistan.

As you are aware, President Bush will meet President Karzai in Washington toward the end of the month for talks on postwar reconstruction. President Bush has indicated that he looks forward to discussing with President Karzai "the progress being made toward our shared goals of rebuilding the country's society and economy, and securing a nation free from terror, war and want." We certainly are aware that President Bush has a great deal on his plate at this time. Thus, we are particularly grateful to him, to Secretary of State Powell and others in the Administration for their continued attention to Afghanistan and their commitment, in Secretary Powell's words, "to create an Afghanistan where terrorists and traffickers can never again flourish."

And that leads me back to security -- and the critical role of ISAF and its expansion to all corners of Afghanistan.

As you know, the transition to Dutch and German oversight of ISAF has gone smoothly. And going forward, we believe that this force, as it expands its mission beyond Kabul, will guarantee the long-term security of our entire country and make it possible for reconstruction efforts to succeed without terror or intimidation. Eventually – and I hope it will be sooner rather than later – we will establish, with the help of our allies, an effective military and police force to allow us to control our own destiny and our own affairs.

I urge this Committee to continue to support the expansion of ISAF, and I hope the Administration will make every effort to press America's friends and allies to join in this effort. As you once remarked, Senator Biden, "ISAF is the vital security blanket without which rebuilding efforts will be in grave jeopardy and the strength of the Central Government eroded and weakened.

Afghanistan internal security remains fragile. Recent outbursts of fighting -- including air strikes yesterday against residual presence of Taliban and Al Qaeda forces reminds us of the specter of oppression and terrorism that was only too real 18 months ago.

Non-interference from our regional neighbors is key. And the **expansion of ISAF** and the establishment of a **national army** will:

- demonstrate international support for the central government
- weaken the influence of regional leaders and their personal armies
- speed reconstruction and economic recovery
- increase the confidence of private investors
- will promote stability and our ability to form a national army

Afghan Army needs to be trained at a faster pace and bigger size. 2000 men in one year are just not enough. Experts say that at least 700,000 guns are unaccounted for and it takes a strong army not only to collect them but also to counter the warlords. And their rapid deployment along with US forces would not only make them better soldiers but also amount to smaller number of casualties of US armed services.

The expansion of ISAF, is very **good for all of the Afghan people** -- who have known only war for the last generation.

The expansion of ISAF -- will also help finish the job of extinguishing all vestiges of the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan -- so democracy has a chance -- good for the Afghan people AND the global community.

To that end -- it is critical even in these times of global economic slow-down -- that Afghanistan receive the promised security and financial assistance to help Afghanistan to recover, and rebuild.

Clearly -- all nations stand to benefit from all new elements of stability in the Middle East -- from any source.

Yes, Saddam Hussein is a very serious problem.

I am heartened that America and the world community are determined to deal with that despot.

And I pledge to you that Afghanistan will support whatever direction the U.S. and Allied nations take in dealing with Saddam Hussein -- and winning another victory for democracy.

But let us also secure the victories that we have already won.

And the best way to secure our victory in Afghanistan is to secure democracy and build prosperity. And, the task of doing that centers squarely on the shoulders of the new government in Kabul and the international business community. And to no surprise, there is much to do.

- We need reliable electric power.
- We need to re-fill the hundreds of empty factories in our cities with workers -- making textiles, cement, and other finished goods
- We need to make a major commitment toward "big infrastructure development" like rebuilding our roads -- that will bring jobs, and add to a national psychology of peace and security.
- Because 85% of the Afghan people are farmers, we need to be embark on a massive program to support new agricultural initiatives -- dams, irrigation canals and systems -- that would employ millions of Afghans. This, combined with an Alternate Crop Substitution for poppy farmers , could curtail illicit drug production tremendously.
- There needs to be a gradual shift from short-term humanitarian help to long-term sustainable development projects.
- Capacity building for the central authority means attracting the Afghan Diaspora, particularly, from the US. I appeal to you to consider additional funding for their provisional return back home to utilize their professional skills.
- Money is needed to fight the campaign against narcotics, production, processing and trafficking, including its nexus to narco-mafia and cross-border instability.
- And we need to keep focused on Afghan's women -- and the establishment of centers for mothers and children in need - in need of literacy, vocational training, and especially medical care.

The Karzai government has organized with remarkable speed and transparency to organize and get on with the business of rebuilding. And we are making progress against a very long checklist. Here are highlights:

- We have implemented a plan for efficient processing of Aid and economic development assistance – housed in the Ministry of Finance -- under a program that would make the Director of OMB proud.
- We have introduced our new national currency -- the Afghani,
- We have embarked upon a highway "ring-road" reconstruction program to build arteries connecting a country the size of Texas. Additional road building will begin with the arrival of spring.
- The Voice of America and the Afghan Information Ministry, with \$10 million from the Pentagon, are installing transmitters to create a national radio network.
- Also with America's help, through Transition Initiatives funding in the amount of \$6 million, we are empowering Afghan-run NGO's, particularly focusing on women's groups and community development projects. We want to make sure that women are full participants and full beneficiaries in the economic growth that is part of Afghanistan's future.

I believe that with the restoration of civil society and the rule of law -- the international private business community will see a welcome mat for business and private investment. And in recent months, we have begun reaching out to the private business and financial communities – with an invitation to come and do business.

Indeed –this is the mission I have personally embraced in my role as Ambassador.

We have great wealth in our undeveloped natural resources in Afghanistan. But we also understand that international businesses will **not invest** and joint-venture with us **until they see**:

- a safe environment,
- the banishment of corruption,
- adherence to commonly accepted business practices, and
- re-establishment of reliable transportation and telecommunications infrastructure.

And with the generous support of international institutions and the U.S. we are working hard to bring these things to pass.

We have the basic elements for building wealth in our nation.

- We have Natural resources -- and they need to be mapped and thoughtfully developed
- We are located in a strategically important location in Central Asia -- much like Denver, there is a logistics and transportation industry in our future
- And we have an entrepreneurial tradition

. . . but these elements will never be organized and mustered -- independent of peace and security -- and the establishment of a civil society.

Security and Economic Development -- are the two rails of our track toward the future.

Better security paves the way for businesses and investment.

Businesses provide freedom with jobs, money for education and personal empowerment -- and more opportunities for women.

We know where we want to be -- And here is part of our strategy -- our business plan -- to get there. [Hold up / Show Task Force Document] I have helped to create the **Private Sector Development Task Force for Afghanistan**. It is a

- coalition of private companies, non-governmental organizations and volunteer experts -- dedicated to accelerating the development of a private enterprise-driven market economy in Afghanistan.
- The primary goal of the Task Force is promote capacity building and institution building of the Afghan government and strengthen infrastructure.
- We are working with the Ministry of Justice to create laws that will protect private investment.
- We are setting up private banks.
- We are working with the U.S. Geological Survey and private energy companies to explore our natural resources.
- We are bringing in the most recent and cost-effective telecommunications technologies -- and a new license for a new wireless company was just recently let.
- And later this year, we will host an international trade show in Kabul and YOU -- are hereby invited to attend.

When you arrive, just tell them Ishaq sent you.

It will be good for top accommodations -- not 4 star ...yet. But. . . one with relative luxuries -- a beautiful carpet on the floor -- and reliable electric power.

In closing, I hope I have offered a useful assessment of where we are and where we hope to go.

I must be candid -- we are not there yet, by any means. And if the progress that we have made in the past year or so is to continue, we will need help -- financial help, technical assistance, and a certain amount of patience.

But I will say again, should not be viewed as altruism by the U.S. or world community. The returns to the U.S. and global security will be commensurate with the investment.

And I will also tell you that President Karzai and I are passionately determined not to squander this moment in Afghanistan's 4,000 year history.

Afghanistan has had enough political revolutions.

Afghanistan has been invaded and occupied by the armies of soldiers.

What we need today is to be occupied by a **new benevolent kind of army**: an army of teachers, doctors, builders, farmers, civil engineers, merchants, bankers and public safety experts -- and perhaps even a few lawyers.

Note... I said -- "perhaps" to the lawyers. . . [as I mentioned...we have a special needs to help clear mine fields...]

The goal here is a jump-start. Not a permanent occupying force. And many of you here in this room – are in many ways part of this benevolent army.

We all need to make sure that the work undertaken on behalf of rebuilding Afghanistan is done in a manner which empowers the people of **Afghanistan to take matters into their own hands**.

As the Afghan proverb says, "A river is made drop by drop." Any great project, any important human undertaking, takes time and requires a long-term commitment. Clearly, the rebuilding of Afghanistan after more than 20 years of war and foreign occupation will take sustained effort and patience. And the timing is urgent.

Afghans are also a remarkably **resilient people and a proud people**--proud to learn; proud to do a good job.

“As Churchill wisely stated, ‘Give us the tools and we will get the job done.’”

Thank you for your attention, I would be most happy to take your questions.

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