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HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF

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(ASIA)

BEFORE THE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

ON

PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM (PRT) PROGRAMS

OCTOBER 4, 2007

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Testimony to the House Armed Services Committee

Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations

“Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan”

October 4th, 2007

Thank you for the invitation to testify on the military role in Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan. In order to accelerate development of Afghanistan, the US Military in 2002 created Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) to integrate US military, US interagency, and host-nation government officials. Initially the US Government listed three goals for the PRTs: establish security, extend the writ of Afghan government into the provinces, and assist reconstruction. The number of teams expanded from three in 2003, to twenty-five today. The United States military leads twelve and coalition nations lead thirteen. PRTs are increasingly more important and contribute significantly to Afghanistan’s progress. For the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF), the PRT is now the principal vehicle to leverage the international community and Afghan government reconstruction and development programs.

The recent US Strategic Review of Afghanistan recognized the need to increase the resiliency of the Afghan Government against the insurgency, strengthen the US Government counter-insurgency efforts, and speed-up development. Many counter-

insurgency experts agree that effective interagency cooperation establishes the conditions for successful prosecution of a counterinsurgency. The PRT serves as the principle vehicle for coordinating the US and Afghan efforts securing common goals in Afghanistan.

The American led PRTs fall under the command of Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF)-82, as overall National Command Element lead for US forces operating in Afghanistan. CJTF – 82 coordinates PRT operations with ISAF headquarters and the US Embassy for policy guidance. All efforts are in support of the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS). The PRT projects are funded largely with Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) Funds and with US Agency for International Development (USAID) funds, and execution is synchronized at subordinate CJTF-82 command levels.

A US-led PRT consists of approximately eighty-five American military members, three American civilians, and five Afghans. The commanding officer of a PRT and his interagency team are responsible for advising local Afghan government officials, coordinating international community reconstruction efforts, and facilitating local government's efforts. Two Civil Affairs teams and an engineer advisory team coordinate development and capacity-building activities directly with local officials, tribal elders, private contractors, UNAMA, and NGOs. A Military Police team coordinates the training and actions of the Afghan National Police. The military component also includes a PSYOPS unit, bomb disposal team, an intelligence team, medics, an administration and

support section, and a force protection platoon to facilitate freedom of movement throughout their area of responsibility.

Normally located with the PRTs are three US civilian personnel from State Department, USAID, and the Department of Agriculture, and one Afghan Government Official from the Ministry of Interior. The State Department's Foreign Service Officer (FSO) serves as a political advisor to the PRT commander and the Afghan Provincial Governor. The USAID Field Program Officer (FPO) advises on development work; the Department of Agriculture employee advises the PRT on agriculture development issues; and the Afghan Ministry of Interior official provides advice on local political dynamics and facilitates intelligence collection.

PRTs train as a team for eight weeks at Fort Bragg, North Carolina before they deploy. The training includes the participation of US Government civilians from the State Department, USAID and USDA. The most recent training in the winter of 2006 included participation by Afghans. This invaluable team training includes weapons handling, convoy operations, cultural awareness, and theatre immersion.

In addition to supporting the Afghan National Development Strategy, PRTs are a key enabler of the counterinsurgency strategy--separating the enemy from the populace, connecting the government with the people, and transforming the environment at the sub-national level. The US PRT in the Panjshir Valley is an excellent example of success. Strong cooperation between ground forces, the local government, and the local populace enabled the completion of approximately ninety projects. Coordinating additional road construction and a wind farm coupled with other USAID projects resulted in a district

center with electricity and many market opportunities. The activities of the PRT are setting the conditions that bring more local support to the central government, further separating the local population from the insurgency, and continuing to transform the lives of the Afghan people. The PRT is the entity to facilitate progress and ensure both the counter-insurgency and national development efforts are complementary and ultimately successful.

Our goal for the future is for the reach of the Afghan central government to expand into the Provinces and districts. With improved security conditions and an increasing local government capacity, the PRT role and functions will reflect the changing environment and accommodate increasing Afghan government capability. As we look to the future, perhaps the biggest challenge in fielding PRTs will be finding well-qualified experienced people to serve as team members. Although PRTs are not exclusively a military project or program, the initial reliance on DoD personnel to staff PRTs is not surprising: DoD is the only department of government that currently has the capacity to surge. The State Department and other agencies can hire additional personnel over time, and are doing so. However, the lesson of Iraq, and of Afghanistan as well, is that our nation would be well served if there existed a “surge” capacity in the non-military skill sets that are so important in the kind of conflicts we have been engaged in since the early 1990’s. We must build additional civilian capacity to participate in these efforts. It is vitally important that we increase the capabilities within civilian agencies and fund the creation of a “civilian reserve” to draw on outside experts when needed.

A reserve corps of civilian experts – civil engineers, retired local government officials, business executives, water and sewer managers, comptrollers, public health administrators and the like – could provide a rapid-response capability the nation lacks today.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.