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**WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN:
HISTORICAL LESSONS**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT
AND INVESTIGATIONS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD:

[There were no Documents submitted.]

WITNESS RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ASKED DURING THE HEARING:

[There were no Questions submitted during the hearing.]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING:

[There were no Questions submitted post hearing.]

WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN: HISTORICAL LESSONS

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS,
Washington, DC, Wednesday, July 18, 2012.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 3:04 p.m. in room 2118, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Rob Wittman (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ROB WITTMAN, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM VIRGINIA, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

Mr. WITTMAN. Ladies and gentlemen, I want to welcome you to the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations for the House Armed Services Committee. And we are now in session.

I want to thank our witnesses for joining us today, and we appreciate your expertise and your perspective on what we believe is an important issue. And we have assembled you today specifically to provide testimony about historical examples of indigenous forces assuming security responsibility from allied military units.

In considering the U.S. withdrawal in Vietnam, the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, and the U.S. redeployment from Iraq, the subcommittee will explore lessons applicable to the current plans to withdraw combat forces from Afghanistan and place the Afghan National Security Forces in the lead by 2014. We recognize, of course, that past events do not offer precise analogies to the current situation; nonetheless, historical experiences can be illuminating when considering contemporary policy.

Our panel today includes Dr. Lewis "Bob" Sorley, an historian and author of several books, including *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam*; Dr. Mark Moyar, also an historian and author of several books, including *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965*; Dr. Joseph Collins, professor of national security strategy, National War College; and Ms. Olga Oliker, director, International and Security Policy Department for the RAND Corporation.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you so much for your participation today and for taking time out of your busy schedules. We look forward to your testimony.

And I note that all Members have received your full written testimony, and this will be entered into the record as it is submitted. Therefore, this afternoon, I would ask that your comments and highlights be limited to significant points and be limited to 5 min-

utes. And this will allow our Members greater time to pose questions and ask for additional information.

With that, I will turn to Mr. Andrews, the ranking member, for his opening statement.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wittman can be found in the Appendix on page 31.]

STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT ANDREWS, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM NEW JERSEY, SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

Mr. ANDREWS. Well, I am acting ranking member. Mr. Cooper has a bout with laryngitis. He has lost his voice, which is a tragedy of significant proportions for the Nation. So we are hoping that he recovers from it soon. And he thanks the witnesses, as well, for their preparation.

This is a very practical hearing this afternoon, and I want to commend the chairman for it. I think if someone took a superficial look at this hearing, they would say, well, this is interesting. We are bringing together four scholars who can talk about historic perspectives on various situations, and that would be sort of interesting. But this is literally a matter of life and death for our country and for our service members as we go about what we hope will be an orderly and rational withdrawal from Afghanistan.

So I commend the chairman for framing this issue in a way that we can learn, in our oversight role, ways that we can successfully achieve that goal and minimize injury and the loss of life to our service members and to innocent people in Afghanistan. It is a very important issue.

And, you know, the bromide is that those who ignore history are doomed to repeat it. Well, those who oversimplify history are likely to make mistakes, as well. And I think it is excellent that we have a panel of experts who understand well the legal and historical, geographic, cultural, religious nuances and differences among the situations that you are all expert in and the one that our country confronts here today.

So thank you, Mr. Chairman, for a very practical and timely chance for the committee members to learn how to do our oversight function.

Mr. WITTMAN. Very good. Thank you, Mr. Andrews. We appreciate that. And we will certainly miss Mr. Cooper and wish him a speedy recovery. And we will make sure that his questions, while maybe not asked verbally, will be answered—

Mr. ANDREWS. Telepathically.

Mr. WITTMAN [continuing]. In written form. That is right, telepathically. That would work, too. I will leave it up to our witnesses to initiate that form of communication.

Well, we are going to start with our panel.

And, Dr. Sorley, we will start with you and then proceed with the other panelists to receive your testimony. Thank you, and welcome.

STATEMENT OF LTC LEWIS SORLEY, USA (RET.), PH.D., HISTORIAN, AUTHOR OF "A BETTER WAR: THE UNEXAMINED VICTORIES AND FINAL TRAGEDY OF AMERICA'S LAST YEARS IN VIETNAM"

Dr. SORLEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My comments have to do with withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam while the fighting there continued.

During the buildup phase of that war, 1965 to 1968, the United States had deployed increasing numbers of ground combat personnel, totaling 543,400 soldiers and marines at the high-water mark. In June 1968, General Creighton Abrams succeeded General William Westmoreland as commander of U.S. forces in Vietnam. Beginning in July 1965, the forces under his command were progressively reduced, with the final withdrawals occurring in late March 1973 in accordance with provisions of the Paris Accords, supposedly ending the war.

The Nixon administration came into office in January 1969, apparently with the expectation of being able to reach a negotiated settlement of the Vietnam War within a few months. When this proved unattainable, President Nixon decided on incremental unilateral withdrawal of U.S. forces, coupling that with a program of increases and improvements in South Vietnamese military forces that was called "Vietnamization."

In June 1969, President Nixon announced the first withdrawal increment, consisting of 25,000 U.S. troops, to be taken out during July and August 1969. General Abrams said to his principal planner for the withdrawal, "It is going to happen whether you and I want it to happen or not. I do not want to be an obstructionist, but I do want it to be done in a way that does not completely bug out on the Vietnamese and leave them flat and unable to defend themselves."

Early on, the field command proposed three criteria to be applied in making decisions on the size and timing of successive withdrawal increments. These were: improvements in South Vietnamese military capability, the level of battlefield activity, and progress in peace negotiations.

During the planning for the first withdrawal increment, General Westmoreland, by then serving in Washington as Army Chief of Staff, precipitated a crisis by insisting that withdrawals consist entirely of those troops who had been in Vietnam the longest, claiming that was the fair thing to do. Abrams strongly objected. He favored redeploying units as units, sending them home intact with the people currently assigned. The Westmoreland approach meant there would have to be wholesale transfers of people in and out of redeploying units to repopulate them with only the longest-serving people. This had a terrible effect on unit cohesion of those units remaining in Vietnam, and General Westmoreland was able to prevail.

As things worked out, domestic political considerations became overriding, and the withdrawal process took on a life of its own. President Nixon apparently decided that to keep the antiwar faction relatively quiet, it was necessary to always have a next withdrawal increment announced and scheduled, regardless of the situation in Vietnam. A second increment of 40,500 was withdrawn

during September–December 1969, and that process continued on a regular basis through 1970, 1971, and 1972, leaving only a small residue, who came out in late March 1973 in accordance with terms of the Paris Accords.

What those data show is a steady and reasonably even downward slope spread over a period of more than 3 years. During that time, extraordinary efforts were being made to improve South Vietnamese forces and governmental mechanisms across the board.

Examination of the Vietnam experience suggests, at least from the standpoint of the field commander, that a viable withdrawal of forces from an active combat theater would include these characteristics: The field command is permitted to determine the composition of withdrawal elements. Criteria for decisions about the size and timing of successive withdrawal increments are in place and consistently applied. Those criteria typically include: progress in developing indigenous forces, progress in peace negotiations, and consideration of the level of enemy activity. And, finally, withdrawing elements are constituted by unit, not individuals.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these observations on the Vietnam experience.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Sorley can be found in the Appendix on page 32.]

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Dr. Sorley. Perfect timing.

Dr. Moyar.

**STATEMENT OF MARK MOYAR, PH.D., HISTORIAN, AUTHOR OF
"TRIUMPH FORSAKEN: THE VIETNAM WAR, 1954–1965"**

Dr. MOYAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am going to also talk about Vietnam from a bit of a different angle. I am going to look at the security forces of the South Vietnamese Government and then also compare those to the situation in Afghanistan today to hopefully help illuminate some issues.

In my view, from studying Vietnam and a lot of other insurgencies, the biggest challenge you face in trying to develop host-nation security forces that can survive over the long haul and as American troops withdraw is the quality of the leadership in those organizations.

One of the most important factors and one that I think unfortunately gets neglected a lot is the question of time, because I have found that you need, typically, at least 10 years to develop the officer corps for these organizations in order to fill key midlevel positions such as battalion commander, district police chief.

In the case of South Vietnam, the government benefited from nearly 3 decades of uninterrupted leadership development, first under the French and then under the Americans. They had more difficulty when it came to putting the right officer into the right command position because of some internal military politics that resulted in a number of coups. That did subside toward the end of the war.

I do think the South Vietnamese leadership did get better. It contributed to the ultimate defeat of the Vietcong insurgency in the early 1970s, which turned the war essentially into a conventional conflict between North Vietnam and South Vietnam. There was a big conventional offensive in 1972 that, a lot of times, historians

don't talk about, but 14 North Vietnamese divisions invaded South Vietnam. And South Vietnam was able to defeat that with U.S. advisers and air support but not U.S. ground forces.

In 1975, there is another massive North Vietnamese invasion, although this time there is no U.S. airpower, no U.S. advisers. Most importantly, the U.S. did not provide enough fuel or ammunition to the South Vietnamese forces to be able to protect the long western flank of their country. And this was a result of a decision by the U.S. Congress in the previous year to slash aid to a level below what the Defense Attache Office had said was the minimum required. So the South Vietnamese did fight well but were simply overcome by the enemy's superior mobility and firepower.

Afghanistan's history in developing leaders is quite different. Between the fall of the Najibullah regime in 1992 and the fall of the Taliban in 2001, there was almost no concerted development of leadership. And after the Taliban fell, it took until 2004 to develop a viable Afghan National Army leader development, and not really until 2010 did the police side get its act together. So when the Afghan Government takes over security at the end of 2014, the Afghan Army will have 10 years, roughly, of viable leader development, so getting to the point where they need to be. The Afghan police, on the other hand, are only going to have about 5 years, and I think they certainly will not be at the same level of performance.

We have also seen in Afghanistan, even more so than in South Vietnam, the influence of nonmerit factors in who is put in positions of authority. Family, tribe, ethnicity, pure bribery has corrupted appointments. And this has a great deal to do with the Afghan president, and so the selection of the next Afghan president will be crucial for that reason, among various others.

You know, Afghanistan's insurgents aren't going to be able to launch a huge offensive like the North Vietnamese did, but I don't think they need to. If you look, from 2005 to 2009 the Taliban were not very strong, but they were able to capture large amounts of territory. And if we see a return of this in 2015, I do think there is a real chance that the country will split ethnically, that we will see an ethnic civil war. We will probably see the Taliban, the Haqqani Network move into the south and the east, paving the way for a return of Al Qaeda and also undermining our ability to operate in Pakistan.

Also, I think among the most disturbing parallels between Vietnam and Afghanistan is the reduction in our assistance to the host-nation forces because of war-weariness and apathy. As you may be aware, the Administration is planning to cut funding from the current level of \$6 billion for the Afghan security forces to \$4 billion after 2014 and to shrink the size of those forces from 325,000 to 230,000, which I think is quite perilous.

I would say, the last thing, just in terms of a U.S. presence, I do think a U.S. presence will be required, and a pretty robust presence, bigger than the 5,000 to 10,000 we hear now, in order to be able to provide a viable combat capability and to deter the enemy.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Moyar can be found in the Appendix on page 50.]

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Dr. Moyar.

Dr. Collins.

**STATEMENT OF COL JOSEPH J. COLLINS, USA (RET.), PH.D.,
PROFESSOR OF NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY, NATIONAL
WAR COLLEGE, AUTHOR OF "UNDERSTANDING WAR IN AF-
GHANISTAN"**

Dr. COLLINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am going to talk about Afghanistan and the Soviets in Afghanistan, but in 2011, the summer of 2011, this summer, I spent some time in Afghanistan with the NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] training mission and working on the issue of transition. And I would be happy to answer questions either about the Soviet Union or about things that are going on there in Afghanistan.

About the Soviet Union: The Soviet Union fought a disastrous war in Afghanistan, but its invasion and the withdrawal were effective and successful operations. In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev became the Soviet leader and soon decided to end the war, which he said had become a bleeding wound. He replaced the ineffective Afghan leadership. He effectively used diplomacy and had the Soviet military help the Afghans develop an effective transition withdrawal and force development plan.

The key elements of the Soviet transition were: first, a clear transition plan with military, foreign aid, and diplomacy generally pulling in the same direction; secondly, a reinvigorated host government with effective, if not at times brutal, leadership; third, improved relations between Kabul, local power centers, and tribal militias—this, by the way, accelerated markedly after the Soviet Union left; and, fourth, a stronger and more cohesive Afghan Government fighting force; and, fifth, up to the demise of the Soviet Union in December 1991, a reliable and generous source of foreign aid.

The Najibullah regime lasted for 3 years after the Soviet withdrawal—some months longer than the Saigon government, by the way. It folded in 1992, a few months after the Soviet Union itself disappeared. After the departure of Soviet troops, Afghanistan went from a war against an invader to a civil war, which came to a decisive, but not final, phase when the radical Taliban seized Kabul in 1996.

Soon after the Soviet withdrawal, the United States left the fight, well before the war ended. U.S. neglect after 1991 left the management of the conflict solely in the hands of Pakistan. This facilitated the advent of the Taliban, the development of an Al Qaeda position of strength in Afghanistan, and, ultimately, the 9/11 attacks on the United States.

Fighting alone, the Soviet Union's enemy in Afghanistan was the whole nation, defended by over 170,000 mujahideen. Today, the United States and its 50—5—0—coalition partners in 2012 are fighting against an extremist religious minority group of no more than 25,000 hardcore adherents whose national approval ratings rarely poll higher than 10 percent.

The Soviet Union fought to secure an authoritarian state with an alien ideology. The United States and its allies are trying to build a stable state with democratic aspirations, where people have some basic freedoms and a claim on prosperity.

In its beleaguered state, the Karzai regime has much more legitimacy than the Afghan communists ever did. Beyond the locale of the conflict, the importance of the sanctuaries, and some tactical dynamics, there are not a lot of similarities between the essence—I say again, the essence of the Soviet Union’s war and the war being fought by ISAF [International Security Assistance Force] and the 50 nations in Afghanistan.

In the end, the Soviet experience in Afghanistan cost 14,000 Soviet and a million Afghan lives. It created a huge Afghan diaspora. It left tens of millions of mines on the ground in Afghanistan and hastened the end of the Soviet Union. It did not create a better peace; in fact, it did not create peace at all.

The United States has the potential to do much better but only if it perseveres in the pursuit of a stable Afghanistan and our interests in the region. We must not again leave the field before the game is over.

Thank you, sir.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Collins can be found in the Appendix on page 63.]

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Dr. Collins. We appreciate your testimony.

Ms. Oliker.

STATEMENT OF OLGA OLIKER, DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL AND SECURITY POLICY DEPARTMENT, RAND CORPORATION

Ms. OLIKER. Thank you very much.

I want to highlight five points from my testimony this afternoon, though I am happy to answer questions about any component of it.

When you look at the experience in Iraq and the experience in Afghanistan, the first thing you want to keep in mind is that Iraq and Afghanistan are very different places. It is true that, on the one hand, both are multiethnic, they are predominantly Muslim, weak governance, high corruption, and certainly both have faced insurgencies. But the fact is that Iraq is an industrialized society and Afghanistan is not. A baby born in Iraq today can expect to live to age 70; one born in Afghanistan can barely expect to live to age 50. In 2000, before the September 11th attacks, almost 80 percent of Iraqis were literate; fewer than 30 percent of Afghans were.

Afghanistan is in such bad shape in part because it has been wrecked by decades of conflict which has spread throughout the country. Iraq fought a long and bloody war with Iran, but it was limited geographically and ended in 1988. The thing is, Iraq has a history of functional government and national security forces—biased and brutal but functional. Afghanistan has no such history. It has had intervals of better government and worse government; better security forces, worse security forces; limited control of the country.

Iraq’s oil resources mean that the country has the potential to be quite wealthy, which means it can pay for its security forces. Afghanistan is stunningly poor. Its economy is highly dependent on the drug trade. It is hard to imagine a functioning Afghanistan that isn’t dependent on foreign aid, including to pay its security forces and sustain them.

Finally, the fact that Iraq is industrialized, the fact that it has better literacy rates, it means that its security forces can be fairly sophisticated. Afghanistan's cannot.

Second point: Despite these differences, we have seen tremendous similarity in how security force development efforts in both countries have been approached and how they are being approached in Afghanistan now compared to Iraq as we prepare to draw down.

There are a few reasons for this. One is that, at least on the surface, the goals seem similar: Build them up, so we can get out during an insurgency. The other reason, I think, is the same people are involved. These conflicts are going on simultaneously. Individuals are moving in and out of the two theaters. The same ideas were being tried one theater to the other.

As we prepare now to draw down in Afghanistan, we really need to get away from our own standards and think about what makes sense in an Afghan context. This was a challenge in Iraq; it is also a challenge in Afghanistan. In Iraq, we found ourselves adjusting our standards down so that we could say they have met whatever it was our standard was. But our actual approaches weren't necessarily geared to what makes sense. And, you know, the example I like for Afghanistan is, we are helping them automate personnel systems, logistics systems. We want to get that done before we leave. We are doing this in a country where people are illiterate, connectivity is poor, and electricity is unreliable.

In both Iraq and Afghanistan, you have seen—or I have seen personally, they keep separate ledgers. They take our systems, and they keep their own systems. And if you ask them, they will tell you, this is what we are going to use when you leave. Would it not make more sense, as we think about leaving, to work with them to build on the systems they have in place? And I think embedded trainers, embedded advisers can be crucial here, in that you could ask, well, how would you do this? What are you really doing?

And I think this also applies to the question of engaging local forces. Some of the things that we have learned in Afghanistan won't work in Iraq. People often raise the Sons of Iraq as a lesson for Afghanistan, the Sunni Awakening. But you have a very different system there. The Sunni Awakening leaders made a decision to cease actively opposing the Iraqi Government and the United States for their own reasons. Things like the Village Stability Operations—Afghan Local Police program, it is for a different purpose. It is focused not on turning insurgents and their supporters but on spreading stability to rural areas.

Reconciliation and reintegration efforts are geared to this, but there is no evidence that the right people are involved or that they would make reliable partners. And here I think we do take lessons from the Soviet experience when we look at the militias that were developed by the Soviets and their Afghan allies, which proved very unreliable and eventually came to fight the civil war.

Finally, as we draw down, we do need to think about continued resourcing, as I think others have said. It is an important note from the Soviet experience that the Afghans held on far longer than anyone, including their Soviet advisers, expected. The Iraqis, we have yet to see. They don't meet our standards, but they are

holding on. So the force we are building now might be able to last. We would like to see them do better than just last. I think we would like to be able to help support them in a way that they can make more lasting peace.

Thank you very much. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Oliker can be found in the Appendix on page 74.]

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Ms. Oliker. We appreciate it.

Panelists, thank you so much for your testimony. It is very insightful, very telling from a historical perspective.

And, Dr. Collins, I would like to begin with you. You pointed out six successful keys to transfer of security responsibility within an indigenous security force. And I want to pick your brain and ask for your perspective on how many of those do you believe are currently in place in Afghanistan. Do you think that all six are required for success?

And what conditions do you think the United States should consider when determining how the exact shape and form of withdrawal and drawdown is going to take place within the realm or the framework of the six keys that you defined?

Dr. COLLINS. Some of these are there; some of them aren't.

In my travels in Afghanistan, I have been very impressed with progress that was being made in the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police. And as Mark pointed out, the army had a long march in this direction; the police, a few years less. But there are people there who are willing to fight.

Some of the shortcomings there are in, as Mark pointed out again, in leader development and also in the responsiveness and agility of the system. The people in the field, they are motivated. They have to fight. They need to get their supplies. They need to move their convoys. And, you know, the ministerial systems are still somewhat shy of where they need to be, and they are working on that.

One of the great things that I saw in 2012 going there, a difference between 2011, was the attitude of the advisers. In 2011, American advisers were obsessed with the notion of, what can we do for our counterparts? And in 2012 that had completely changed. It was tough love. "The Afghans have to do it themselves. They have to start today doing it themselves. They are not going to be borrowing helicopters. They are not going to be using ISAF as sort of a means of supply. They are going to make their own systems work." And lots of progress there out in the field.

The rest of the government, again, a giant step behind, although ministerial advisers there are helping just about everywhere. One problem, of course, is in governance and corruption.

And we really have to think in terms of the future government of Afghanistan. And the folks in the embassy were very, very proud of the fact that they have already begun to dialogue with the Afghans about the very sensitive subject of the next set of elections. Mr. Karzai has said he is not going to run; there is going to be a new Afghan President. And already there are a number of coalitions that are forming to run as, sort of, multiethnic coalitions to get the most amount of votes. And some of the same actors who

were present will be on the stage, and some people who are close to President Karzai are also probably going to take a run at it.

In terms of the six elements, I think there is a good plan. I think there is a possibility for a reinvigorated host government with new and vigorous leadership. And there are some star leaders down there among the general officers and among the deputy ministers who are moving to the fore.

Improved relations between Kabul, the local power centers, and the tribal militias, I think some of that has begun to happen with the Village Stability Operations. And our folks are working on that real hard.

And the Afghan Army and police, I think, are moving right up the tape. In the field, they are potentially very, very strong actors. Making the whole thing work—command and control, logistics, and all of that—is going to be problematical. But, again, this is a situation where they are not fighting the world's greatest army; they are fighting the Taliban. They are not fighting, as the Soviets and Najibullah had to do, a nation in arms. They are fighting a small minority, and they should have an opportunity.

And a reliable and generous source of foreign aid. I think we have crossed a lot of good boundaries here in the last few weeks. We have a strategic partnership agreement. The Chicago summit was a success. Our NATO allies have bought into the business of at least \$4 billion a year, and the Afghans plan on contributing to that, as well.

I am over the time for my response, but I have to say that, you know, the Afghans are looking forward to managing to a greater degree their own war. You know, for example, in one of our studies, we came up with the notion that it would be nice, since \$4 billion seemed to be a good number, that one of our options was to build down the Afghan forces. The Afghans are pretty convinced that they can run the force they have today on the \$4 billion a year, and they are not looking forward to building down the force, not until the security conditions in the country begin to improve.

And if I can just say one thing about the United States, we have been being driven by the calendar here up until 2014. And as we enter this very, very sensitive period, we need to make sure that we are paying very strict attention to conditions on the ground and that we are not blindly following a schedule which would get us into an awful lot of trouble if we are not careful.

I am sorry for going over.

Mr. WITTMAN. That is all right, Dr. Collins. Thank you. And we heard some of the same concerns from the Afghans when we were there recently, about the drawdown from 350,000 to 230,000 and how that transition would take place in a reasonable way and where their capabilities would be. So I think that is obviously an issue in their minds and an issue also back home here, as far as a question.

With that, we will turn to Mr. Andrews.

Mr. ANDREWS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I thank the witnesses for the testimony.

Dr. Collins, in your opinion, why did the Najibullah regime fail in Afghanistan?

Dr. COLLINS. I think the Najibullah regime, for the time that it was in power, from 1986 to 1992, made a number of tremendous improvements. In a number of battles, they were able to fight the mujahideen to a standstill, and in a couple of places, like the first big battle in Jalalabad, they beat them soundly. They were—in effect, they were a better military force in that one battle.

There were a number of problems that Najibullah had. For example, there was this unresolved issue between the factions of the governing party that not only infected the governance of Afghanistan but also affected the relations between the KGB and the army on the Soviet end.

But I think the real reason why Najibullah failed was because his funds dried up. When the Soviet Union went out of business in December 1991, the large amounts of money, the truck convoys, the aerial deliveries of everything from food to ammunition, that all stopped. And Najibullah continued on for a few months, but—

Mr. ANDREWS. So, to paraphrase, the absence of an indigenous Afghan economy that could support a regime caused the dependency upon the Soviet largesse. The Soviet largesse evaporates, so does the regime.

Dr. COLLINS. Every leadership in Afghanistan in the 20th century—

Mr. ANDREWS. Yeah.

Dr. COLLINS [continuing]. The strong leaderships have had strong foreign support.

Mr. ANDREWS. How would you rate the status of the Afghan economy today as it stacks up against, say, 1996? Is it any better?

Dr. COLLINS. It is much better. The legal economy is growing rapidly. And, of course, we know about the problem of the illegal drug economy.

Mr. ANDREWS. Right.

Dr. COLLINS. But the economy has been growing.

Mr. ANDREWS. Do you think the economy is large enough to support a viable regime this time around?

Dr. COLLINS. In the future, with the addition of moneys from their strategic minerals, they will begin to be able in the next decade or 2 to wean themselves from foreign assistance.

Mr. ANDREWS. If you had to take an educated guess, is the present level of U.S. aid sufficient to sustain economic development in Afghanistan? If not, how much more is needed?

Dr. COLLINS. I think the amounts of—and it is not just the United States on the economic assistance front—

Mr. ANDREWS. I understand, but the whole NATO complex I mean.

Dr. COLLINS. Yeah. I think international economic assistance, if, in fact, they deliver on the \$16 billion promised at the Tokyo conference, I think that is enough, economically, to keep their head above water. And if we can keep up the \$4 billion a year for the Afghan National Security Forces—half a billion of which, by the way, is coming from the Afghans—I think that that will be enough to keep them going.

Mr. ANDREWS. So putting aside for a moment the very real tactical differences about the pace of withdrawal that I hear among the witnesses, is it your conclusion that the fundamentals of the

present plan—which are to ramp up the effectiveness of the Afghan forces, sustain economic development in Afghanistan, encourage a fair and free election, and then work with the winner of that election—do you think that is essentially the right plan?

Dr. COLLINS. I think that is absolutely the right plan, and I think it is on track. There are a lot of places where it could not go off track.

Mr. ANDREWS. What do you think of the 2014 timetable? Is it too fast?

Colonel COLLINS. If I were the president and I became the new president in—

Mr. ANDREWS. Are you announcing your candidacy?

Dr. COLLINS. No. No, no. No, I am far too smart for that.

Mr. ANDREWS. Okay. The opposition research has already started on you. I mean, you know—

Dr. COLLINS. It is a tough job, yes. And you can have all my tax returns back to 1980.

Mr. ANDREWS. Okay.

Dr. COLLINS. They will put you to sleep.

Mr. ANDREWS. Okay. Fair enough. Don't strap your dog to the roof.

Dr. COLLINS. You mean again.

Okay. I think it is quite possible that we could slide back to that in—we could slide 2014 into the future.

But I am not sure there is a sentiment for that now. I think our NATO allies think 2014 is the right answer. And there is a missing piece here, and the piece is, what does the NATO ISAF force after the one we have right now, what does it look like?

Mr. ANDREWS. I see my time has expired. I appreciate your answers, and we look forward to your declaration of candidacy. Thank you.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Andrews.

We will now turn to Mr. Conaway.

Mr. CONAWAY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, folks, thanks for being here.

Dr. Sorley, I know we are looking at mostly the impact on Afghanistan and Iraq, those kinds of things. But I would appreciate your comments on, after the fall of Vietnam—or the Vietnam War was over and, again, the fall of the Soviet Union and the Cold War, we trimmed our forces back dramatically. It looks like we are about to do the exact same thing following the experiences now.

Can you give us your historical perspective on how well that worked or didn't work and what are the risks to our system?

Dr. SORLEY. I have in my head the reverberation of comments I have heard General Abrams make when he was Army Chief of Staff. And he would say to any audience he could get to listen, "We have paid"—he would pound out each time—"We have paid and paid and paid again for our failure to be prepared for war, even though we didn't want it. And we paid in the blood and sacrifice of our soldiers." So he was strongly in favor of not having that done again.

Things were a little different after—at least after the Korean War, in that the circumstances with respect to the Communists worldwide motivated us to maintain a much larger standing force

than we ever had in peacetime before. People my generation were young officers in that period, and we had served primarily in Europe, and we had really a very good Army at that time.

It does look like we are going to once again drastically draw down the forces. There are some pluses as well as some minuses, though. One of the concerns I have had for a number of years is that we have basically been exploiting our Reserve Components in ways that I think were never contemplated until now. I have thought perhaps we did that in part because we doubted, our leaders doubted, in an All-Volunteer Force environment whether we could attract enough people to maintain a larger Active Force. And so we augmented it with the Reserve Forces, doing things much like Active Forces, not like Reserve Forces.

If we draw down dramatically, we need to be very careful that we maintain a system that will enable us to reconstitute a force in a responsible and relatively rapid way if the time comes when we need that. You hate to predict that those times will come, but one statistic that has always impressed me is that no class graduating from the United States Military Academy, which was founded in 1802, has failed to have an opportunity to serve in combat.

Mr. CONAWAY. Thank you.

Ms. Oliker, given the lack of immunity that the Iraqis wanted to give our troops to stay beyond December 31st of 2011—and most of us believe that was an important segment—is that we got out right off the bat. Could you talk to us about what the circumstances have been in Iraq, given the immediate pullout on December 31st, 2012, has had in Iraq and what the—or—yeah, go ahead—has had in Iraq, from your perspective?

Ms. OLIKER. We continue to see violence in Iraq—

Mr. CONAWAY. Is it violence at a level that is law enforcement? Or is it violence at the level of military fighting?

Ms. OLIKER. So the Iraqi Armed Forces maintain a very strong internal role. I mean, this is one of the things that we have seen in both countries as we start off thinking that the police are going to take on a lot of these tasks and they don't. This isn't a matter of the violence and the level of violence; it is a matter of the capacity of the police forces and the need to use the military in these roles and, you know, in part, our failure to build police forces that can take those on.

I think Iraq has escalating violence in some very unnerving areas today. I think we see a government that is trying to consolidate, perhaps at the expense of some of its—those it needed to make a coalition. I don't think Iraq is out of the woods yet. I do see that the Iraqi Government plans to put the police in the lead role for security this summer, and I am a little skeptical of how that is going to work out. But I don't know that us staying longer would have made the difference. And I think that is the important part.

Mr. CONAWAY. All right.

Dr. Collins, you were there having the NATO training mission. Could you talk to us a little bit, quickly, about the impact education has in Afghanistan? We heard a great deal from General Caldwell when he was there, that, you know, bringing these folks

up to a 2nd-grade level is part of the issue. Could you talk to us about the impact that has on the ability to develop leaders?

Dr. COLLINS. I think it is one of the most important things we have started. There is only—there are a couple of generations of people where there is a tremendous amount of illiteracy. And the only adult education program in the country now is in the police and the army. And we have found people who are joining. I have sat through, both in 2011 and 2012, some of these classes. The classes are conducted by civilian instructors, and the students are genuinely enthusiastic—as enthusiastic as they are about anything.

I think this is extremely important and it needs to be continued, particularly in the police. Basic literacy is just so important, you know, even for two soldiers to know, which AK-47 [assault rifle] is mine? You know, unless you are going to start painting bunnies and birds on the rifle stock, you know, people have to be able to read the serial number. A policeman needs to be able to say, it was that car, you know, that kind of make and model, that sort of license plate. That is going to make a big difference.

Education throughout the country is a tremendous improvement. There were hundreds of thousands of people, all male, when the Taliban left. There are now millions, and in the high 30 percents are female. There is just no telling where that is going to go.

There is another explosion of individual learning that is going on in Afghanistan through cell phones, the Internet, and whatever. There is a tremendous cell phone culture in Afghanistan which is incredible. Also, an awful lot of media. Nearly 90 percent of Afghans hear the radio every day.

And so, there are a lot of good—a lot of good things have happened there. In education and health care, there are—barring the reappearance of civil war, there are tremendous permanent improvements that have been made in Afghanistan that are going to revolutionize that country.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Conaway.

We will now go to Mr. Critz.

Mr. CRITZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Collins, you made a comment about education and about the people in Afghanistan being able to identify even the serial number on their rifle. And that leads right into a question about the educational level and professionalism, because both you and Ms. Oliker mentioned the Afghan local police and the issues that exist there.

Now, the administration has targeted a number of about 30,000 Afghan local police. And I just would like to hear your comments on the sizing of the force and the possibility or, maybe because of low education and a lack of professionalism that that can engender, their devolvement into just tribal groups within their local areas.

So we will do ladies first. Ms. Oliker, if you would answer first.

Ms. OLIKER. I think that, actually, the VSO-ALP [Village Stability Operations-Afghan Local Police] program is one program that is trying to take lessons from the Soviet experience, because they are very nervous about it looking like the effort to build militias during the Najibullah regime, which was very effective in building up the forces which quickly overtook the regular security

forces in number and really did undermine its own purpose over time.

So the idea is to try to keep groups small, to try to keep the program manageable, to try to limit the, kind of, links to warlordism and make sure that that is not what you are doing, that you are not empowering an army warlord, and also to keep the mission a very limited defensive mission.

Now, in terms of education and their capabilities, we have made some tremendous strides with literacy programs. We continue to have very limited reach to the Afghan police as a whole, including of those programs. So I am not sure that the average Afghan National Police officer has a better shot at being literate than your average ALP member. So I don't know that, you know, I would say that that is what is making the difference in their professionalism or capability.

The ALP, they are meant to be local, to provide for local defense. I think it is very crucial that, as that is built up, that is where it stays, that this isn't seen as a replacement for formal security structures. But I don't think that it is inherently problematic in that context.

Mr. CRITZ. Thank you.

Dr. COLLINS. When I was in the Government, 2001–2004, and I was the DASD [Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense] for Stability Ops, I was one of the major obstacles for holding back on this notion of local police forces below the Ministry of the Interior. I have since become a convert.

I think the Village Stability Operations are the way to go. They have obvious dangers of these people becoming new warlord armies and also in discipline. You know, young men with a little bit of money and guns in a local area where there are no organized army or police forces who are there—you know, the dangers are obvious.

The way you get around them is by good training—and these people are being trained by special operations forces from ISAF—and then supervision from the Ministry of the Interior. That, of course, could be problematical. The Ministry of the Interior has, from time to time, had problems with, you know, supervising the uniformed and the border police.

And so this is something that is going to have to be worked on over time. But I think 30,000 is a good start. And if this program succeeds up to the 30,000 level, I think they would doubled it.

Mr. CRITZ. Well, thank you.

Dr. Sorley, in your written testimony, you indicate the withdrawal decision should be based on criteria other than political calculations. So my question for you would be, do you think that DOD [Department of Defense] currently has in place sufficient mechanisms to measure the situation in Afghanistan to ensure that we are conducting our departure responsibly?

Dr. SORLEY. That is a key point.

And the first thing I would say that makes me more optimistic than I would otherwise be is that the domestic political context in which the Nixon administration was making its decisions on withdrawals was extremely difficult. A very active antiwar faction was causing it great difficulty. And as I alluded to briefly in my opening remarks, the President apparently felt it was necessary to always

have a next withdrawal increment planned and scheduled before the one in progress had finished.

What is radically different now—and it is an enormously influential difference—is that we have an All-Volunteer Force, and, therefore, we don't have those factions in the streets advocating a more rapid withdrawal or noninvolvement to begin with.

So I think it is possible, in that less heated environment, to establish the appropriate criteria in a more professional way and then to have a hope if you are the senior military leadership that the political leadership will not only back you but be able to do that.

I think, too—Dr. Collins had suggested it earlier in his remarks, the possibility that a 2014 deadline could be possibly moved forward, at least for some elements of some size. I don't think that was an option in the Vietnam era. Had that been tried, I think that the thing would have fallen in on them. Maybe now, though, there is a possibility that that could be negotiated.

Mr. CRITZ. Thank you.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Critz.

We will now move to Mr. Coffman.

Mr. COFFMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I would like to thank the panelists for being here today.

Ms. Oliker, I think you talked about parallels between—or a lack of, maybe, parallels between Iraq and Afghanistan. And several of you discussed the lagging capabilities of the police forces in Afghanistan.

And let me just say, I served in Iraq in the United States Marine Corps in 2005–2006 in civil affairs. And I was in Fallujah in 2005, where we stood up a police force under pressure to move the transition forward. And it was a failure because we could rely on the Iraqi Army, who went into a secure base camp at night, who weren't necessarily from the area, but the Iraqi police force that was stood up would go home within the community. And if they were effectively doing their job, the insurgents would follow them home and kill them, and their families, too.

And so, as 2005 wore on, we began to lose control of the city and take casualties within the city. But when it was cleared out in 2004, we secured—all of the entry points were secured coming into the city, and all vehicles were searched and everything. Changed from the United States Marines controlling those points to Iraqi police, and they were letting the insurgents inside the city.

So I just think that—and when I—from there, I went to Haditha, you know, as a civil affairs officer with a battalion that was doing a blocking position along the Western Euphrates River Valley. And there we didn't even have enough security to establish a police force at all, so we didn't try; we just relied on U.S. Marines and the Iraqi Army.

And so, are the same issues in Afghanistan in terms of trying to stand up a police force?

Ms. OLIKER. Some of them.

Now in Afghanistan, as in Iraq, you have a national level force which is supposed to have more of a counterinsurgency mission and more local police that are supposed to be recruited in their local areas and then deployed there as well. There has been a lot of dif-

ficulty recruiting in some of these areas. And Dr. Collins may have more recent information than I; I think mine is about a year old. So they have had to recruit from elsewhere, bring them in and kind of set up some barracks in some cases.

So it is a little bit different because often you just don't have the local police available. And, of course, the whole VSO-ALP program, because in some rural areas you have no security at all, and you have to build something.

Now, I think this is part of the problem, the sort of counterinsurgency you have; that if you are fighting an enemy that has a tremendous amount of support within the population, developing forces that are loyal to the central government, you know, it is inherently a tremendous challenge. And figuring out ways to convince the population as a whole, you know, not just to build loyal police, but to convince the population that, you know, their own government is in their interests rather than the insurgency is really the fundamental challenge here.

Dr. MOYAR. Can I comment on that question, as well?

Mr. COFFMAN. Sure.

Dr. MOYAR. I do address that in my longer statement, but the question of how we get them to take ownership is a recurring one. In Vietnam, we actually have some positive examples where, in the latter part of the war, as the U.S. withdraws, you actually do see the South Vietnamese taking on a greater responsibility, in large part because they see they can't rely on the United States and they realize their survival depends on getting their act together.

Now, we are hearing a lot of talk lately from policymakers in this country about the same thing happening to Afghanistan. You know, let's take the crutches away, let them—you know, if we force them to do more, they are going to do more. But I think the case you have raised, Iraq is actually a very cautionary point because it shows that there is two outcomes: There is the Vietnam outcome, where they get their act together, and then there is the Iraq 2005-2006, where they keep failing, suffering massive losses. And, as we know, the reason we turned Iraq around was that General Petraeus in 2007 said, you know, it is great to support self-sufficiency, but they are not doing it, we are going to have to go in and do some of these things for them.

And I think there is a real risk in Afghanistan, especially with the police force, as you mentioned, because, as I say, I don't think they are going to be ready to be self-sufficient at the end of 2014, and I think there is a strong need for continued U.S. advising with those forces. And if we simply throw them out there on their own and they suffer horrific losses, it is going to be catastrophic. And we have seen that already happen in a number of cases in Afghanistan.

Ms. OLIKER. Can I just jump in quickly to say we are not advising them now on the police. Our reach in mentoring or advising the police is atrocious.

Dr. COLLINS. Two ways of sort of looking at the police. First off, there are different types of police. And, in general, the border police and the ANCOF, which is the national civil order police, Afghan National Civil Order Police, they are like gendarmes. Both

the border police and the ANCOP are better trained and have a much more solid reputation.

The regular uniformed police and the counternarcotics police, you know, particularly the Afghan uniformed police, they vary from region to region. And in areas where there has been less fighting and in areas where the Taliban has been weak, the Afghan uniformed police, the regular police, are in very good shape.

In other areas that were Taliban strongholds, like in Helmand, the uniformed police are just beginning to become effective. Their trainers are just transitioning from being allied forces trainers to being Afghan trainers. And, in some cases, that means you are taking young officers from other parts of the country who may not be Pashto speakers and putting them down in those areas—a big problem, and they have to work it out.

There is also excess training infrastructure in the Afghan National Police, and the Afghans are aware of that. The big surge in Afghanistan was not the 40,000 allied forces; the big surge in Afghanistan was Afghan National Army and Police. And we built up their infrastructure to do that, and now they are going to need to tailor that regional police and army training structure back down to a manageable level.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Coffman.

Mr. COFFMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. WITTMAN. We will go to Mr. Young.

Mr. YOUNG. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you all for being here today.

Dr. Moyar, I was struck by your lesson from Vietnam that it takes about 10 years, at least in that case, to train midlevel officers, get them up to the level of competency to carry out their missions. And I just wonder, as we try and assess whether we are dedicating, planning for the appropriate amount of time for advisory and training missions, whether different conditions might merit a more compressed time frame for training and experience to be gained in Afghanistan, or perhaps it is a more extended time frame.

What commonalities or what differences strike you as you compare and contrast the two different environments?

Dr. MOYAR. Yeah. And I have—in my most recent book, I looked at this across a lot of different countries. And I have seen pretty much in just about every case 10 years is the absolute minimum. Now, if you look in our own military, our own police force, you are talking 15 to 20 years before we give people the kind of—you know, turn them into a battalion commander. When you get below 10, you see pretty consistently, you know, military incompetence and abuses of power. You know, one of the biggest problems we see consistently with inexperienced counterinsurgency forces is stealing chickens and beating people up and doing things of that nature.

And consistently, again, as I mentioned, this is something that is oftentimes forgotten in a crisis, because what usually happens is things get bad and somebody says, well, hey, we really need to expand the security forces. And so, you can train that private and equip them in 6 months, and a lot of times people don't recognize that what it takes to make a private is very different from what

it takes to make a lieutenant colonel, and so when you compress it, as we have often tried to do, it is a disaster.

I mean, in Afghanistan we got this wrong, especially in the police, for almost a decade, where we kept thinking we are going to get a whole bunch of police officers, train them real quickly, give them 8 weeks of training, throw them out there. You know, the Afghan National Auxiliary Police is the most striking example, where, you know, a lot of them ended up deserting or defecting to the enemy. And not until early 2010 did we even, you know, I think, take a more long-term approach, and that is at which point it really got turned over to General Caldwell, the NATO training mission.

There is still, I think, too much pressure to get people through quickly. You know, they have extended officer training for the police from 8 weeks to 6 months for a lot of these folks. A lot of people would tell you, you know, you really want to train these people for a year if you really want to get the type of people you want.

I will say that there are some really impressive institutions in the Afghan forces there. Their equivalent of West Point, the National Military Academy, is terrific. They have, you know, a longer course; the police do have a longer course. But I think when you try to cut corners and try to do it more quickly, it ends up just being counterproductive.

Mr. YOUNG. Ms. Oliker, there have been a number of recent media reports related to the motivation of the indigenous forces in Afghanistan and to their training. And often these are favorable reports, at least from our standpoint, that the forces are becoming more capable. But there is a lamentation, frequently, which follows such professions of competence, related to insufficient equipment.

I would be interested, based on your earlier thoughts related to the need to adapt to local circumstances, whether you think instead we ought to change our thinking here and put more emphasis on a localized model of preparing these forces and equipping them with military materiel.

Ms. OLIKER. There is no developing-world military that doesn't want the newest, shiniest, most advanced equipment, and there are very few that can maintain it. And if you look at all of these experiences—I haven't looked at Vietnam in as much depth as I have looked at the Soviet Union, in Afghanistan, us in Afghanistan, us in Iraq—maintenance of equipment is a tremendous challenge. I mean, the Soviets were able to give out Kalashnikovs [assault rifles]. You can bury one of those in the sand for 30 years, pull it out, and it will still work. We are giving them far more advanced materials.

I have also—consistently, I think, there is a bit of a hoarding mentality. So rather than repair it, they want new ones. And sometimes even if they have new ones, they want more new ones. And we have had a hard time keeping track of just what happens to equipment in the past in Iraq. I think we have done better in Afghanistan, but I also think you need to treat with a grain of salt statements that, really, we just need more stuff.

Thank you.

Mr. YOUNG. Thank you.

I finished with 1 second remaining for the record. Yield back.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Young. We appreciate that.

We will now go through a second round of questions.

And, Ms. Oliker, I want to follow up with your question from Mr. Young. You had stated in your earlier testimony about sophisticated versus simple, and that U.S. forces are trying to pursue a more sophisticated model in both training and equipping the Afghan forces.

And I want to know, even with the advances in education, which by our metric is still fairly small, is it the proper model to be pursuing that element of sophistication in that force capability?

And the reason I say that is because there is still an effort by U.S. forces to develop an air support element to where Afghans can fly helicopters, another support element with not even being able to gather intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance information but actually be able to use it to put together battle plans. We know that some units are somewhat capable of doing that, others are not.

Is it a realistic expectation for us to model every element of the army within that realm? Or should we be looking at a more simplistic model to say that maybe our expectations there should be more limited and more in the realm of what local police and national police do, and look at a different role for the army within that realm?

Ms. OLIKER. So I think any systems that are going to be broadly used need to be very simple because, no, the—no one has ever actually been able to explain to me what a 2nd-grade-level literacy is in Afghanistan, but I assume it means that they can, you know, sound some things out, read serial numbers, and so forth. That is not going to get you to the system we are trying to deploy ANA [Afghan National Army]-wide and ANP [Afghan National Police]-wide.

This said, that doesn't mean you can't build an air component. We have actually done that, right? There are Afghan pilots who are doing fine. It is not that everybody in the country is illiterate. It is that you have elite capabilities which you can get at a much higher level of sophistication for, and you have what the general force looks like and how it operates, where you do want to start with something that you will be able to promote your private into doing, that your supply officer can actually handle the supply system. And I think it is very important to make that differentiation.

Dr. COLLINS. Sir, may I say a few words about this?

The Afghan Army is very simple. It is a very light force. It even has very few mortars and artillery pieces.

The Afghan forces under Najibullah had 240—240 attack aircraft. The Afghan forces today have 11, only 7 of which are flyable. Our big initiative for them was the Super Tucano, which was 20-odd very primitive aircraft. And that has some kind of contracting problem. And so, you know, that thought is still on the books, it is still a plan, but right now, if you want to ask yourself how many attack aircraft do Afghan forces have, the answer is seven. And those numbers are in the DOD report, so I am not revealing anything here.

Close air support is a tremendous force multiplier. We need to think hard about what we are doing here. And there are ways to solve this particular problem. The Afghan Air Force is the last

force out of the chute for the Afghan national forces, and I really think we need to look to its development all the way around.

Our Air Force, this year, decided that they are going to take 100 A-10 attack aircraft out of the system. And those are sophisticated close air support weapons. You all know more about them than I do. But that may be a potential solution here. If the Air Force is going to take these and put them in the boneyard, I don't know why we need to buy the Super Tucano if we, you know, might be able to do something with those aircraft.

I have asked some Air Force folks about it, and the answers I get are, well, geez, we have never exported the A-10 aircraft. I don't know what that means. There may be something in the A-10 that we don't want—that we need to keep in the boneyard. But, in any case, there may be a potential solution right here, in terms of equipment that we have already declared to be surplus.

Mr. WITTMAN. Dr. Sorley.

Dr. SORLEY. I would like to just comment briefly based on the Vietnam experience.

A factor to be considered is what weaponry does the enemy have and how does what we are giving our clients match up with what they have. In the early days of our involvement in Vietnam, when General Westmoreland was the Commander of U.S. Forces, he equipped the South Vietnamese with essentially castoff World War II U.S. equipment, things like the M1 rifle, which was almost as tall as the average Vietnamese, and carbines. And, meanwhile, the Army was equipping their forces with the AK-47, one of the great assault rifles of all time; still is.

And when General Abrams came on board then, one of the first things he said was, we have to face it, the Vietnamese have been getting the least support of anybody involved in this, and this is what we are trying to change. He then gave them priority for the M-16 rifle and other things that helped them be more effective in field. But a lot of damage was already done, and damage in terms of our support for the Vietnamese and for their conduct of the war. Because these underarmed, underequipped South Vietnamese forces were taking a beating pretty often in their encounters with the enemy, which badly affected their morale, their effectiveness, and, even more important, their self-respect and their reputation.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Dr. Sorley.

And we will go now to Mr. Andrews.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Chairman, I do not have further questions but would like to make a final comment at the appropriate time.

Mr. WITTMAN. Please—yeah, we are going to go through and see if there are any further questions, and then we will close with your comments.

Mr. Conaway.

Mr. CONAWAY. Well, thank you.

The issue about when to pull out or when to draw down the forces; if you set a timeframe of 2014, can the Afghan security forces get good enough in that 2-year remaining timeframe; can the Taliban stand on the sidelines and run the risk that the Afghan security forces get so good that they can't do what—you know, all that nonsense. And then we lay in there that strategic partnership

agreement that the Administration is talking to them about that would extend U.S. commitments to 2024.

Can you all talk about, does that partnership agreement have an impact, is it of value at this stage, in terms of what the Taliban are trying to decide their role will be and how they assess what their opportunities are to dismantle all this hard work?

Dr. MOYAR. I will talk to that question.

I think those agreements have been somewhat helpful, but I think we shouldn't assume that that is going to spare Afghanistan from further trouble.

One thing I want to mention, because we haven't really talked about it much today, is the role of Pakistan in all this. You know, they clearly provide, either purposely or tacitly, support to a lot of these insurgents. And as long as that continues, there is going to be a problem.

You know, if you look at Vietnam, the 1972 offensive—sometimes you think, well, if we keep a lot of U.S. forces there, no one is going to attack. Well, in 1972, there were 69,000 Americans in support and advisory roles, and the North Vietnamese still went ahead and attacked.

The other thing I would raise is, I think there is still a danger, even with these agreements, of cutting the funding because we can always—you know, in Vietnam we didn't completely cut the funding, but we let the Congress cut it to a level that made survival impossible. And as Bob mentioned, in the case in Vietnam, as you start to pull out more and more, there is a momentum to get out. And we saw the same thing in Iraq. You know, I think a lot of people thought in Iraq we would keep a residual force, and in the end, you know, it became politically expedient to get out. And so I think there is a real danger that, going forward, that we may cut down the aid to levels that are insufficient. And so I hope—I would urge you to keep your eye on that.

Dr. COLLINS. If I could just say a word or two about this.

We abandoned the mujahideen. We thought our job was to get the Soviets out. We did it, and we said, okay, that is it, we will hang in there for humanitarian aid but nothing else. That led to the Taliban, which of course brought in Al Qaeda—well, it didn't bring in Al Qaeda, but developed a symbiotic relationship with the terrorist organization, and that led to 9/11.

No one would predict an exact replay of such a situation, but the whole notion of American or Western abandonment is alive and well in Pakistan and Afghanistan. And the strategic partnership agreement and the declaration at Chicago, they have had some good effect. On the Pakistan side of the fence, it has been pretty clear that 2014 doesn't mean 2014, period, end of song. We are going out to 2024. We are talking about a new force after ISAF. We are reopening the ground lines of communication to Pakistan, which is important for their economy as well as for our supply.

And all of a sudden now, after being dormant for 4 or 5 months, people now are talking about reconciliation, which is the term for peacemaking. The Taliban are not going to say much about reconciliation and peacemaking until they get green lights from Pakistan. And, apparently, the strategic partnership agreement and the Chicago declaration have had some salutary effects in the short

run. I think Mark is absolutely right. These are now words, and they have to be backed up by deeds. And they have to be backed up by deeds between now and the next 10 years.

Mr. CONAWAY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Conaway.

Mr. Coffman.

Mr. COFFMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let's just say that there is—let's draw some assumptions to say there is not reconciliation with the Taliban, that we do continue support, that we do the transfer in operational control by the end of 2014 whether or not they are prepared for that, and we have a very light footprint of advisers left, but we continue our support in accordance with the agreements already made. Under those set of facts, what is the worst-case scenario the United States can expect?

Because it seems to me that this is not, when we talk about Vietnam, this is not the North Vietnamese, where there was insurgency and there was a very large conventional force. There is no conventional force here. I question their ability to amass their forces adequately to take Kabul. They may be able—maybe there are certain provinces toward the east and to the south that may fall.

But so where is the worst-case scenario?

Dr. MOYAR. Well, and I laid this out a little bit, but, you know, I think the worst case is that you start to see some major insurgent gains in the south and east and you see a lack of action or even defection among some of the Pashtun commanders within the Afghan security forces, which—you know, if you look in their past, there are lengthy histories of commanders switching sides. And we have already—I think it has subsided a bit, but in recent years we have already seen Pashtun and Tajik blocs forming within the Afghan security forces in anticipation of something like this.

And, now, the Tajiks have built up a lot of strength around Kabul. You know, I don't know the insurgents would necessarily go attack Kabul, at least right away, but even if they just have much of the south and east, that would allow them to bring other groups in, potentially Al Qaeda, Haqqani, which—you know, Haqqani and Al Qaeda are doing business together a lot in ways we don't, I think, fully understand. And it would also force us to remove a lot of our counterterrorism presence.

So I am not sure we—and there could be, ultimately, some full-scale battle for Kabul. But even without that, I think the scenario could be pretty bleak, potentially.

Dr. COLLINS. I think that, first off, in the long run, the Taliban can't win unless we quit. There is no North Vietnamese Army here backed up by Russia and China with massive pipelines and Russian tanks and mechanized equipment. That sort of development is not a possibility.

But there are bad things that could happen. You could have a deterioration of security conditions in any number of places. You could have, in the long run, a coup, where the security forces get together and basically say, the rest of this government is not cutting it, we are going to take over and restore order and have martial law. You could also have a civil war where you have Tajiks and Uzbeks on one side, Pashtuns on the other. A bad peace with the

Taliban would not be a good idea, could be something that could cause a civil war very easily.

All of these things are preventable through engagement and U.S. assistance and continuing to work the situation. The Taliban is not a strong enemy. It is not like the North Vietnamese; it doesn't have Russia and China behind it. And unless we quit or show signs of quitting, Pakistan is not going to, sort of, unleash its forces to help them get control of the country.

Ms. OLIKER. The one thing I would say, though, is that we—I don't disagree, but I also think that our best-case scenario isn't that far away from some of our not, kind of, bad-case scenarios. As long as you still have Pakistan supporting the insurgents, the Afghan Government, even with continued support from us, is not going to control the entire country. It is not going to be able to exert rule; it is not going to be able to maintain security forces it trusts everywhere.

We are going to see—I think, you know, the odds are very high we are going to see continued conflict. The question is, are we going to prevent the emergence of real terrorist safe havens for Al Qaeda? Are we going to be able to sustain a government in Kabul?

Mr. COFFMAN. One quickly, and that is, if, though, we—if Afghan security forces control the bulk of the country, even if you had areas that fall to the Taliban, wouldn't we not have a base of operations whereby we could launch counterterrorism operations against those areas to knock out the very terrorist—

Ms. OLIKER. Right.

Mr. COFFMAN [continuing]. Elements that you just talked about?

Ms. OLIKER. Right. I think that is your best case. But your best case is not peace, security, stability, and, you know, effective growth in the near term.

Mr. COFFMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Coffman.

We are going to go to closing comments now.

Mr. Andrews, I will go to you.

Mr. ANDREWS. Chairman, thank you.

And I would like to thank the witnesses for their preparation and their testimony here this afternoon.

I think there is a lot of agreement among the Members as to what we either cannot do or don't want to do. No one that I know is for an indefinite U.S. occupation of Afghanistan. It is a straw man used a lot around here, but I don't think anybody is for it. Nor is anyone for an abandonment of that area of the world. I don't think that anyone who lived through 9/11 could in good conscience say, "let's just totally disengage from that area of the world." That would be irresponsible.

So the choice is really the nature of our engagement. The optimal engagement is one in which a flourishing Afghan economy yields a legitimate government, which yields a security structure which denies terrorists the opportunity for safe haven in Afghanistan forever. The least desirable outcome is one where we have to be much more engaged and kinetic on a regular basis in order to prevent that from happening. I think that this discussion has been quite useful in helping us develop some metrics as to which of those two polar opposites we are headed toward.

Optimism is not usually justified in the case of studying these issues, but I do think there is some basis for optimism. This panel and the full committee has heard from any number of sources in the last 6 or 7 months some very encouraging data about the readiness of the Afghan forces. And it is not just what I would call process data about how many people signed up or how many units have been formed, but how many units are really taking the lead and how many units are actually performing the vital security functions. I think that there is real reason for progress.

Mr. Chairman, I think that your hearings have served a very important function, and I hope that we continue them, because this panel and others have given us a set of criteria that I think we can apply intelligently. Now we need to apply those criteria and ask the hard questions of our uniformed and civilian leaders at the Department of Defense as to how things are going.

You know, this is not, as I said at the outset, an abstract, theoretical discussion. I cannot walk past the Capitol dome and not think about Afghanistan, because I understand that, but for the heroic Americans on Flight 93, there is a good chance that dome would not be standing today. And that evil emanated from a failure in Afghanistan. We can't afford another one.

So I think giving us the opportunity to assess that is very useful. I thank you and our colleagues and look forward to our continued collaboration on this issue.

Mr. WITTMAN. Very good. Well, thank you, Mr. Andrews.

And we do have some remaining hearing time that we will be trying to conclude the series of pieces of information that we want to put together. What our focus is is to bring that information together, have it as a conduit for decisionmaking by the full committee. And I am hopeful that what we put together here will be a useful foundation for, as you said, the questions we need to ask of our uniformed military leaders, also those folks within the Office of Secretary of Defense, to determine, you know, where are we going, where is progress being made, what are the challenges left, how do we make sure that we get this transition right.

I think everybody's focus is that, and I think you have pointed that out. All of us, every day, think about, you know, what are we doing to support our men and women that are there fighting this fight, how do we make sure that the sacrifices made by this country, our families and the men and women that fought there are not in vain, that we give some semblance of a chance at success for forces there in Afghanistan. And you pointed out very eloquently that there has to be a basis of security, of governance, and of a sound and functioning economy. If those things emerge, that country has a chance, I think, in the long run to be successful and self-sustaining.

So I appreciate our witnesses and their thoughts today. What you have given us is a great perspective from history as to where we need to go in asking questions and keeping up the efforts on this panel's part to ensure we are asking the right questions of how decisions are being made. History is a good teacher. It is not the only teacher, but it is a good teacher in determining how we make decisions going forward.

So I deeply appreciate the time that you have spent with us today, your perspectives. And we offer, too, if you have additional comments that you would like to make, the committee is ready, willing, and able to accept them.

And if there are any additional written questions from the panel members today—or, excuse me, from our Members to the panelists, we will get those to you in short time.

So, folks, thanks again. And, with that, we will adjourn the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee hearing.

[Whereupon, at 4:29 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

JULY 18, 2012

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

JULY 18, 2012

Statement of Hon. Rob Wittman
Chairman, House Subcommittee on Oversight and
Investigations
Hearing on
Withdrawal from Afghanistan: Historical Lessons
July 18, 2012

Today the Oversight and Investigations subcommittee convenes the third in our series of hearings related to the Afghan National Security Forces.

We have assembled a panel of specialists to provide testimony about historical examples of indigenous forces assuming security responsibility from allied military units.

In considering the U.S. drawdown in Vietnam, the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, and the U.S. redeployment from Iraq, the subcommittee will explore lessons applicable to the current plans to withdraw combat forces from Afghanistan and place the Afghan National Security Forces in the lead by 2014.

We recognize, of course, that past events do not offer precise analogies to the current situation. Nonetheless, historical experiences can be illuminating when considering contemporary policy.

Our panel today includes:

- Dr. Lewis “Bob” Sorley, an historian and author of several books, including *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America’s Last Years in Vietnam*;
- Dr. Mark Moyar, also an historian and author of several books, including *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954–1965*;
- Dr. Joseph Collins, Professor of National Security Strategy, National War College; and
- Ms. Olga Oliker, Director, International and Security Policy Department, RAND Corporation.

Thank you for your participation. We look forward to your testimony.

Redeployment from Vietnam

**Statement
by
Lewis Sorley**

**House Armed Services Committee
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
Hearing on Withdrawal from Afghanistan:
Historical Lessons**

18 July 2012

Background

Every war is different, but examination of past wars can often yield insights that are useful in dealing with later ones. Certainly consideration of the manner in which American forces were withdrawn from Vietnam while the fighting continued is worthwhile in those terms.

During the years when General William Westmoreland commanded MACV (Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, the top American headquarters)—June 1964 to June 1968—and in response to his repeated requests for more troops, the ground forces deployed reached well over half a million men (soldiers and marines), at the high water mark numbering 543,400.

In June 1968 General Creighton Abrams succeeded Westmoreland as commander of U.S. forces in Vietnam, serving in that capacity for the next four years. During those years the forces under his command were progressively reduced, beginning in July 1969, with the final withdrawals occurring in late March 1973 in accordance with provisions of the Paris Accords.

The Schedule and Considerations

The Nixon administration came into office in January 1969, apparently with the expectation of being able to reach a negotiated settlement of the Vietnam War within a few months. When this proved unattainable, President Nixon decided on incremental unilateral withdrawal of U.S. forces, coupling that with a program of increases and improvements in South Vietnamese military and paramilitary forces called “Vietnamization.” That approach was designed to en-

able the South Vietnamese to progressively assume more and more of the responsibility for their nation's security while the United States withdrew from a direct combat role but continued to provide financial and matériel support to the South Vietnamese.

Such support was essential if the South Vietnamese were going to be able to sustain their independence, since neither North nor South Vietnam had the capacity to arm or supply themselves with military wherewithal. Each depended on outside patrons, and North Vietnam was getting continuing (and later greatly increased) support from its communist backers, principally China and the Soviet Union.

At the Midway conference in June 1969, meeting with South Vietnamese President Thieu, President Nixon announced the first withdrawal increment, consisting of 25,000 U.S. troops, to be taken out during July and August 1969. (The troop withdrawals were called "redeployments," which did little to disguise their nature.)

Many commentators on the Vietnam War have written that the field command resisted these withdrawals, but that is not factual. Deputy Ambassador Sam Berger recalled that "Ambassador Bunker and General Abrams and I agreed that following Tet [1968] it was essential that the American presence be reduced as quickly as possible and that the Vietnamese be given every opportunity to develop with arms and equipment and training. After Tet it was impossible for us to stay there on the old basis, and that was fundamental."

The *MACV Objectives Plan* published by Abrams in 1969 included an assertion, labeled "the heart of the matter," that "the reduction of American forces is required, not simply as a ploy to 'buy' time, but also as a necessary method of compelling the South Vietnamese to take over the war. They must!"

The new Secretary of Defense, Melvin Laird, strongly supported U.S. troop withdrawals. And Laird, said his senior military assistant, Lieutenant General Robert Pursley, "felt he had a receptive audience in Abrams, and a supporting military commander for that line of strategy."

Matters were considerably complicated by the fact that Nixon and Laird had somewhat different outlooks on how the withdrawal should be accomplished. Laird aggressively pushed for the fastest possible withdrawal, whereas Nixon was more disposed to take troops out only as rapidly as necessary to pacify domestic opposition to the war. "I never was a great supporter of the Vietnam War,"

Laird told his biographer. "I was a great supporter of getting the hell out of there."

The initial planning for withdrawals was done on a "close hold" basis. Colonel Donn Starry served as principal planner, working directly for General Abrams, who told him: "It's going to happen whether you and I want it to happen or not. I do not want to be an obstructionist, but I do want it to be done in a way that does not completely bug out on the Vietnamese and leave them flat and unable to defend themselves."

Criteria for Successive Withdrawal Decisions

Early on the field command proposed three criteria to be applied in making decisions on the size and timing of successive withdrawal increments. These were improvements in South Vietnamese military capability, the level of battlefield activity, and progress in peace negotiations.

In the event, however, domestic political considerations became overriding and the withdrawal process took on a life of its own. President Nixon apparently decided that, to keep the anti-war faction relatively quiet, it was necessary to always have a next withdrawal increment announced and scheduled, regardless of the situation in South Vietnam.

Abrams told his senior associates he had "urged that we stick with 'cut and try,' " meaning that following each incremental withdrawal the results would be assessed before deciding on the magnitude and timing of the next increment, but that was not to be.

Abrams sought authority to determine what types of units, and what specific units, to include in each withdrawal increment in accordance with his judgment of what would be best for the South Vietnamese and, as the process went on, what would best enable him to provide security for the remaining Americans and give him the manpower and equipment needed to out-process subsequent increments when the time came. He was, for the most part, given that latitude.

In Vietnam the field command debated whether it would be better to construct succeeding withdrawal increments by taking out division-size slices and a related service support slice, or alternatively thinning out by brigade forces drawn from several locations. Briefing the matter to Abrams and the staff, Colonel Starry noted that "thinning

out does not get spaces, and spaces are the goal of these redeployments—at least as far as Washington sees it.” And, he added, “Also arguing against thinning out is that it tends to spread the risk evenly across a wide area. Instead of reassessing priorities and focusing on where the risk is least undesirable, it apports a *degree* of risk to everyone, everywhere.” They decided on the division-size approach.

In these early stages the field command still hoped to have some influence on the timing of successive withdrawal increments. Said Colonel Starry: “There must be time for combined planning with the Vietnamese, for the orderly and progressive transfer of responsibilities for operational areas, for bases and facilities, for participation in pacification programs, and for all resources of the government of Vietnam to be brought to bear in a realistic manner on the problem with which they are about to be confronted.” Commented General Abrams: “What we’re trying to do on this is move it along so there is movement, but *not* create *panic*.”

A second increment of 40,500 was withdrawn during September-December 1969, bringing the total for that year to 65,500. In 1970 another 140,000 came out in three increments, then in 1971 four more increments totaling 160,000. Finally in 1972 a final five increments took out 157,000. That left approximately 20,900 (deducting the number already withdrawn from the peak deployment, but not accounting for understrength) to be brought out in late March 1973 in accordance with terms of the Paris Accords.

What those data show is a steady and reasonably even downward slope spread over a period of more than three years. During that same time extraordinary efforts were being made to improve South Vietnamese forces and governmental mechanisms across the board. Said William Colby, in charge of U.S. support for rural development, they were in a race to get the South Vietnamese army “up to speed” and “to get the country pacified before the soldiers are gone.”

To further complicate these tasks, no one knew how much time remained for accomplishing them. There loomed the possibility that some kind of an agreement in Paris would in short order terminate the involvement of outside forces, thus leaving the Vietnamese where they then were in terms of self-sufficiency. This forced continual compromises between doing things that would help in the immediate future and those that would have only longer-term, but more substantial, payoffs.

And, as early as November 1969, Secretary of Defense Laird specified that planning for the expanded and upgraded RVNAF would not include provision for a continuing U.S. support force. Everyone was going home.

The pressures from Washington were great, and went beyond even desires to pacify the anti-war movement and to cope with budgetary shortages. During a June 1970 visit to Vietnam Secretary of the Army Stanley Resor described another reality: "We've really already set the draft [future schedule and magnitude] on the assumption that there would be redeployments in that period..." It was, he emphasized, "too late to go back" and produce more manpower.

In Vietnam again in April 1971, Resor paid tribute to the enemy's ability to sway world opinion: "It might be fair to say he's in fact achieved the objective of getting us to withdraw ground troops fairly at a steady and significant rate. He's done that, of course, by the effect he's had in the United States, and that's what's caused it here."

In May 1971 Abrams described his current outlook to the staff: "This redeployment started out with various goals. We were going to be able to do them at a certain rate. And then, hell, almost before you get started, they wanted to accelerate it. Well, not only wanted to—*did*. That has a *hell* of an impact on logistics and personnel. Well, in the past we were *big* enough, and had enough people, so that you could wrench the thing in that way without causing a major disaster." For the past several months, though, we've had to look down into "the chasm." We are pulled two ways—support what's left and get out what has to get out. "There's an awful lot to be done, and if we're going to do it without *scandal*, and without the charges of abandonment, we've got to get in it."

Then a briefer, noting that Republic of Korea and Thai forces were also going to be withdrawing, discussed the looming competition for redeployment assets, especially ports. And, he said, closure and turnover of bases could be expected to saturate the RVNAF ability to accept and maintain them, with 750 sites—ranging from a five-man team house to a division base camp—to be turned over.

Said Abrams: "In this 184,000 that we have to get [down] to by the first of December [1971], it's a hell of a struggle to make sure that what's in that is what's going to be the most useful for South Vietnam." Thus: "We've got to get the tonnage out of here, and there's a lot of it. We've got to have a command and control element. We've got to have an advisory element. And we've got to have some kind of

support that sees to the mail and rations and hospitals for the Americans.”

As the process continued into early 1972, Abrams suggested that “maybe there comes a point, with the military, where you can’t have a *few* military. You’ve got to have *none*,” because the few would not have even the capability of sustaining themselves. “How much of a logistics tail did Lewis and Clark have?” he asked, provoking laughter.

At one point General William Rosson, deputy to General Abrams, said of the inexorable succession of withdrawals, without reference to the established criteria: “Well, of course we have gone on record as saying that this is *not* the way to *do* it.” Abrams (laughing): “Yes, and that’s been *disapproved*.”

As the withdrawal played out, its timing dictated largely by domestic political considerations, the South Vietnamese earned great credit for how well they managed to cope.

The Westmoreland Policy

During planning for the first withdrawal increment General Westmoreland, by then serving in Washington as Army Chief of Staff, had precipitated a crisis by insisting that withdrawals consist entirely of those troops who had been in Vietnam the longest, claiming that was the fair thing to do.

Abrams strongly favored redeploying units as units, sending them home intact with the people currently assigned.

The Westmoreland approach meant that there would have to be wholesale transfers of people in and out of redeploying units to repopulate them with only the longest-serving people.

That would be, quite obviously, the most disruptive thing that could be done to the remaining forces. Ripped apart by having all their most experienced people taken out, they were then reconstituted with a collection of individuals whose only shared attribute was relatively less time in Vietnam, a formula for destroying any semblance of unit cohesion. “Our fear was that the turbulence rate would be so high that units would become ineffective,” said Donn Starry. “And that’s what happened. I believe it caused most of the indiscipline in units which plagued us later.”

But Chief of Staff Westmoreland was able to prevail.

When the issue was finally decided Abrams and Starry, having worked the issue most of a night (Saigon and Washington being off-set thirteen hours in time), clearly foresaw the consequences. Remembered Colonel Starry (later a four-star general), Abrams "turned to me and said, 'I probably won't live to see the end of this, but the rest of your career will be dedicated to straightening out the mess this is going to create.' How right he was."

From the start the individual withdrawal policy caused enormous difficulties. Instead of sending back intact units, those troops who had been in Vietnam the longest were withdrawn from their various units, aggregated under the flag of a unit selected for redeployment, and sent home, thus stripping all the remaining units of their most experienced people. Meanwhile those left behind from the units withdrawn (because they were not among those with the longest service) were redistributed to the remaining units.

As this process was repeated over and over again (during successive withdrawals) the cohesion of existing units was progressively diluted, with effects extending even to the post-war Army. Said General Maxwell Thurman, who played a key role in the later rebuilding process, General Westmoreland's "fair and equitable" redeployment policy was "a disaster."

Problems for the Field Command

The field command experienced considerable difficulty handling the early withdrawal increments when there was confusion and controversy over whether the President's announcements meant that, for example, the troop ceiling was being reduced by 25,000 men or, alternatively, 25,000 men were being taken out.

Since the field command was typically understrength throughout the process, taking out a specified number rather than reducing the ceiling perpetuated that understrength and exacerbated the difficulties.

Even while withdrawals were underway it was necessary, due to the one-year tour policy, to send a continuous stream of replacements for the men in units not yet withdrawn who were completing their Vietnam tours and returning home. The Army frequently fell short in providing the necessary number of replacements. This also exacerbated the effects of the drawdown.

While negotiations were underway about the size, composition, and timing of successive withdrawal increments, MACV was fighting yet another battle, one aimed at staving off budgetary decisions that would further curtail the forces available in Vietnam. The individual services, under intense pressure to reduce expenditures, were trying to bring some expensive units back from Vietnam. The Navy cut ships on the line by half, and Secretary Laird announced, without any prior coordination with MACV, that B-52 and tactical air sorties were being reduced. The Air Force reduced tactical fighter squadrons, yet another budget-driven decision.

The war was still a serious matter, as Abrams stressed to General Earle Wheeler (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) and Admiral John McCain (Commander-in-Chief, Pacific), and he had no resources of his own. "The sum total of our combat power is what the services give us," said Abrams. "Quite frankly it makes my position as an operationally responsible commander in the field most difficult if the services proceed to carve out on their own my operational capability." Thus: "I ask only that I be consulted and given a chance as they, the services, begin to cut and run."

Effects on the South Vietnamese

A larger military establishment was essential if the South Vietnamese were to assume the full range of responsibilities from departing American and other allied forces, but expansion was not confined to the conventional RVNAF (Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces). Instead, it took place proportionally more, and probably more importantly, in the Territorial Forces (Regional Forces and Popular Forces) providing local security, with the Regional Forces under control of province chiefs and the Popular Forces answering to district chiefs.

As they grew in capability, these latter forces were incorporated into the regular military establishment, where they then constituted somewhat more than half of what eventually grew to an armed force of 1.1 million men (an increase of 400,000 since 1968). They provided the "hold" in the clear and hold approach adopted by Abrams in preference to the "search and destroy" tactics favored by his predecessor.

"Gradually, in their outlook, deportment, and combat performance," said South Vietnamese Lieutenant General Ngo Quang Truong, "the RF and PF troopers shed their paramilitary origins and increasingly

became full-fledged soldiers." So decidedly was this the case, Truong concluded, that "throughout the major period of the Vietnam conflict" the RF and PF were "aptly regarded as the mainstay of the war machinery."

Thus expanded in numbers, and better equipped and better trained, the Territorial Forces came into their own, earning the respect of even so tough a critic as Lieutenant General Julian Ewell. "They were the cutting edge of the war," he said admiringly.

Additional defensive capability was provided by four million members of a People's Self-Defense Force, armed with some 600,000 weapons (which they shared), and more importantly constituting an overt commitment to the government in opposition to the enemy. President Thieu had authorized creation of this force over the objections of virtually all his advisors, saying "the government has to rest upon the support of the people, and it had little validity if it did not dare arm them." His confidence was validated by the results.

In the earlier years of the war the South Vietnamese had been given relatively little in terms of combat support and modern equipment, neglect that affected their capabilities, their outlook, and their reputation. Finally South Vietnamese forces, both regular and territorial, began to recover from the effects of long-term neglect and to receive weaponry that was comparable to that issued to U.S. forces, and indeed comparable to that long employed by the enemy.

"You've got to face it," Abrams told his senior associates, "the Vietnamese have been given the lowest priority of anybody that's fighting in this country! And that's what we're trying to correct."

The tasks facing the South Vietnamese as U.S. forces withdrew was formidable indeed. Secretary of Defense Laird described it in a November 1969 statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: "When the present administration took office, a program of upgrading the training and equipment of South Vietnamese forces had begun. The goal of this program, however, was limited to increasing the combat capability of the forces of the Republic of Vietnam to the level needed to defeat the Viet Cong once all North Vietnamese forces had been withdrawn from the south. The Nixon administration early this year worked out a new objective with the government of South Vietnam for the training and equipping of the armed forces of South Vietnam. The objective we set was attainment by the South Vietnamese of a level of combat capability which would be adequate to defeat not only the Viet Cong, but the invading North Vietnamese as well."

General Abrams saw the evolving situation for what it was, with the South Vietnamese being asked to vault higher and higher hurdles. "We started out in 1968," he recalled. "We were going to get these people by 1974 where they could whip hell out of the VC—the VC. Then they changed the goal to lick the VC and the NVA—in South Vietnam. Then they compressed it. They've compressed it about three times, or four times—acceleration."

"So what we started out with to be over this kind of time"—indicating with his hands a long time—"is now going to be over this kind of time"—much shorter. "And if it's VC, NVA, interdiction, helping Cambodians and so on—that's what we're working with. And," Abrams cautioned, "you have to be careful on a thing like this, or you'll get the impression you're being screwed. You mustn't *do* that, 'cause it'll get you mad."

But Abrams, always sympathetic, was also realistic. "Sooner or later the Vietnamese themselves have got to settle this thing," he acknowledged. "We can only help, and we can only help so much."

The 1972 Easter Offensive

The PAVN (People's Army of Vietnam, the North Vietnamese Army) history of the war reveals that "the combat plan for 1972" had as its stated goal "to gain decisive victory in 1972, and to force the U.S. imperialists to negotiate an end to the war from a position of defeat."

When, in late March of 1972, the enemy mounted a conventional invasion of South Vietnam by the equivalent of twenty divisions, a bloody pitched battle ensued. The enemy's "well-planned campaign" was defeated, wrote Douglas Pike, "because air power prevented massing of forces and because of stubborn, even heroic, South Vietnamese defense. Terrible punishment was visited on PAVN troops and on the PAVN transportation system and communication matrix." But, most important of all, "ARVN troops and even local forces stood and fought as never before."

Later critics said that South Vietnam had thrown back the invaders only because of American air support. Abrams responded vigorously to that. "I *doubt* the fabric of this thing could have been held together without U.S. air," he told his commanders. "But the thing that had to happen before that is the Vietnamese, some numbers of

them, had to stand and fight. If they didn't do that, *ten times* the air we've got wouldn't have stopped them."

South Vietnam's defenders inflicted such casualties on the invaders that it was three years before North Vietnam could mount another major offensive. By then, of course, dramatic changes had taken place in the larger context.

The Paris Accords

In late January 1973 the Paris Accords, theoretically bringing an end to the fighting in Vietnam, were signed. To induce the South Vietnamese to agree to the terms, viewed by them as fatally flawed in that they allowed the North Vietnamese to retain large forces in the South while Americans and other allies of the South Vietnamese were required to depart, President Nixon told President Thieu that if North Vietnam violated the terms of the agreement and resumed its aggression against the South, the United States would intervene militarily to punish them for that.

And, said Nixon, if renewed fighting broke out, the United States would replace on a one-for-one basis major combat systems (tanks, artillery pieces, aircraft) lost by the South Vietnamese, as was permitted by terms of the Paris Accords. And finally, said Nixon, the United States would continue robust financial support for South Vietnam. (In the event, the United States defaulted on all three of these commitments.)

Provisions of the Paris Accords notwithstanding, North Vietnamese aggression against the South continued. The South Vietnamese fought valiantly, taking heavy casualties but essentially holding their own, until the United States compounded their problems by defaulting on promises to continue providing essential matériel and financial support. Meanwhile the North Vietnamese were getting greatly increased support from their communist patrons. Given that disparity, defeat was inevitable. Cabled Tom Polgar, the last CIA Chief of Station, Saigon: "Ultimate outcome hardly in doubt, because South Vietnam cannot survive without U.S. military aid as long as North Vietnam's war-making capacity is unimpaired and supported by Soviet Union and China."

Some Conclusions

Examination of the Vietnam experience suggests that, at least from the standpoint of the field commander, a viable withdrawal of forces from an active combat theater would include these characteristics:

+ The field command is permitted to determine the composition of withdrawal elements so as to maintain a balance amongst operational capability, security for those elements remaining, and the capacity for outloading subsequent departing elements.

+ Criteria for decisions about the size and timing of successive withdrawal increments are in place and consistently applied throughout the withdrawal process.

+ Those criteria typically include progress in developing indigenous forces, progress in peace negotiations, and consideration of the level of enemy activity.

+ Withdrawing elements are constituted by unit, not individuals.

As I suggested at the outset, every war is different, but examination of past wars can be useful in deciding how to conduct later ones.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these observations on the Vietnam experience.

Biographical Summary

Lewis Sorley

Lewis Sorley, a former soldier and then civilian official of the Central Intelligence Agency, is a third-generation graduate of the United States Military Academy who also holds a doctorate from the Johns Hopkins University. He has served on the faculties at West Point and the Army War College.

His Army assignments also included leadership of tank and armored cavalry units in Germany, Vietnam, and the United States and staff positions in the offices of the Secretary of Defense and the Army Chief of Staff.

He is the author of a book on foreign policy entitled *Arms Transfers under Nixon* and three biographies, including *Thunderbolt: General Creighton Abrams and the Army of His Times* and *Honorable Warrior: General Harold K. Johnson and the Ethics of Command*. The Johnson biography received the Army Historical Foundation's Distinguished Book Award. An excerpt of the Abrams biography won the Peterson Prize as the year's best scholarly article on military history. He has also received the General Andrew Goodpaster Prize for military scholarship from the American Veterans Center.

His book *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam* was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. His edited work *Vietnam Chronicles: The Abrams Tapes, 1968-1972* received the Army Historical Foundation's Trefry Prize for providing a unique perspective on the art of command. A second edited work, *The Vietnam War: An Assessment by South Vietnam's Generals*, has recently been published.

Dr. Sorley has also written *Honor Bright: History and Origins of the West Point Honor Code and System*, a book commissioned by the United States Military Academy's Simon Center for the Professional Military Ethic. At the Army's request he also compiled and edited a two-volume work entitled *Press On! Selected Works of General Donn A. Starry*, published by the Combat Studies Institute Press at Fort Leavenworth.

His most recent biography, *Westmoreland: The General Who Lost Vietnam*, was published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt in October 2011.

Dr. Sorley is an Emeritus Director of the Army Historical Foundation and is Executive Director Emeritus of the Association of Military Colleges and Schools of the United States. During the Spring 2009 semester he was the first Gottwald Visiting Professor of Leadership and Ethics at Virginia Military Institute. Also in 2009 he was named a Distinguished Eagle Scout by the Boy Scouts of America. In 2010 the U. S. Army War College designated him an Outstanding Alumnus, and in 2011 he was named a Distinguished Graduate of the United States Military Academy.

DISCLOSURE FORM FOR WITNESSES
 CONCERNING FEDERAL CONTRACT AND GRANT INFORMATION

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2

contracts			
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federal grant(s)/ contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant
NONE			

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Prepared statement by
Mark Moyar Ph.D.

*Committee on Armed Services
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
United States House of Representatives*

July 18, 2012

Security Transition in Vietnam and Afghanistan

Thank you Chairman Wittman, Ranking Member Cooper, and other members of the committee for the opportunity and honor to testify today. By way of background, I have written two books on the Vietnam War and am currently working on a third. From 2004 to 2010, I served as a professor at the U.S. Marine Corps University, and during two of those years, I wrote a book on the general subject of counterinsurgency entitled *A Question of Command*, which is also highly relevant to today's topic. I have been to Afghanistan four times, in each case focusing my attention mainly on Afghan's security forces. The first visit was a research trip for *A Question of Command*. The second came at the invitation of the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A), which asked me to speak to Afghan leaders and leaders-in-training about counterinsurgency as part of the organization's inaugural leadership initiative. In the third instance, I conducted analysis of the Afghan Local Police Program for the ISAF Counterinsurgency Advisory and Assistance Team, and in the fourth I was a member of a U.S. Central Command analytical team.

Today, I am going to compare the Vietnam and Afghan wars, with primary emphasis on security force development, which is the most important task facing nations under attack. As is true with most broad historical comparisons, this one includes important similarities as well as important differences, some of which are easier to discern than others. I believe that discussion of both the similarities and differences will provide insights that will be useful to this committee in its deliberations on Afghanistan and related matters.

Leadership in Counterinsurgency

Fielding high quality leaders was the principal challenge in building security forces in Vietnam. It is the principal challenge in building security forces in Afghanistan today. I arrived at this conclusion, and decided to write a book about it, after many years of detailed study of counterinsurgency. If you speak with veterans of Vietnam, Afghanistan, or similar wars who have worked closely with indigenous security forces, they will all tell you the same thing: the effectiveness and integrity of those forces was driven primarily by the quality of their leaders. Units with good leaders fight skillfully and tenaciously and treat the population with respect. Units with bad leaders perform poorly on the battlefield and prey on the population. Good leaders figure out which tools are required to succeed in the peculiar environment where they are operating, while bad leaders are liable to apply tools that worked well somewhere else but not in the current environment. No amount of counterinsurgency doctrine will make bad leaders effective, for the variability of counterinsurgency frustrates reliance on cookie cutter solutions.

Leadership quality is determined by two activities: leadership development and leadership selection. The first is a long-term process, while the second can be done very quickly. One of the greatest mistakes that has been committed in security force development, and one that has been committed again in Afghanistan, is insufficient consideration of the time required for leadership development. An enlisted soldier can be recruited, trained, and equipped in six months. As a consequence, policymakers and planners often assume that entire military or police units can be produced in such a period of time. But effective security units require leaders with much longer periods of experience than the rank-and-file. A minimum of ten years of experience is required for critical mid-level positions such as battalion commander or district police chief. In our own system, we take fifteen to twenty years to develop individuals for those jobs. When security forces are expanded very rapidly, as they often are when a country undergoes political upheaval or comes under attack, officers with insufficient experience are thrust into critical positions of authority. The resultant security forces invariably lack the military prowess to defeat the enemy and the discipline to refrain from abuses of power.

Leadership selection is the process of assigning individuals to specific leadership positions. In the U.S. military, leaders are assigned by centralized boards. In many other countries, they are assigned by one or more senior leaders. Putting the power of appointment in the hands of one or a few individuals permits more rapid action and requires less compromise, which can be good or bad, depending on whose hands we are talking about. During the Huk Rebellion in the Philippines, Secretary of Defense Ramon Magsaysay turned the security forces around in quick order because the Philippine president granted him complete authority over personnel decisions and he promptly used that authority to weed out bad leaders. In many other cases, however, the concentration of appointment powers has resulted in decisions based on factors other than merit, such as partisan politics, personal connections, and bribery, much to the detriment of leadership quality.

Security Force Leadership in Vietnam

The development of South Vietnam's security force leaders began during the Franco-Viet Minh War of 1946 to 1954. The French colonial government recruited and trained huge numbers of young men, from both the North and the South, and provided some of them with years of leadership experience as military officers, militia commanders, or civil administrators. When the war ended, many of those who were Northerners by birth joined the million-person exodus from the North to the South in order to escape Vietnamese Communist oppression.

Thus, when Ngo Dinh Diem became President of an independent South Vietnam at the end of the war, he had some human capital with which to work. Diem was not, however, satisfied with the leaders he inherited, because many were corrupt or lazy, particularly those at the middle and upper levels. He therefore set out to cultivate a new generation of leaders, consisting of raw recruits and young men with a few years of experience in the colonial era. When war returned in 1960, this new generation was not yet ready to take charge, with the result that the war went badly for the Diem government in 1960 and 1961. In 1962, Diem began inserting members of this new generation into key leadership positions, which led to a dramatic turnaround in the war.

In November 1963, the United States supported a coup against Diem based on a gross misreading of South Vietnamese politics. A military cabal murdered Diem and purged the new generation of leaders he had created, causing a precipitous decline in the effectiveness of the war effort. A succession of coups ensued, each of which was followed by purges that further

debilitated the leadership of the security forces. Fear of coups caused the national leadership to bestow critical commands on the basis of personal loyalty rather than competence. The politicization of appointments subsided following the solidification of rule by Nguyen Cao Ky and Nguyen Van Thieu in the middle of 1965, but it did not disappear entirely.

The weakening of South Vietnam during the period of coups resulted in a North Vietnamese decision to shift from guerrilla warfare to decisive conventional warfare, which compelled U.S. ground forces to enter the war in the middle of 1965. For the next several years, in recognition of the need for better leadership and the perils of overstretching the officer corps, U.S. and South Vietnamese security force architects concentrated on long-term development of South Vietnamese leaders rather than numerical expansion of the forces. These efforts began bearing fruit at the end of the 1960s, as the South Vietnamese Army, militias, and other security forces exhibited marked performance improvements at that time. By the early 1970s, the Viet Cong insurgency had largely been wiped out, compelling Hanoi to rely exclusively on North Vietnamese forces to wage war in South Vietnam.

Under President Richard Nixon's Vietnamization program, U.S. forces gradually turned over critical tasks to South Vietnamese forces. The withdrawal of U.S. forces led to a greater willingness of the South Vietnamese government to prosecute the war effectively, as it forced South Vietnam's elites to choose between stepping up their game and watching the nation go down in flames, and they were conscientious enough to choose the former. At all levels, South Vietnamese leaders showed greater resolve in fighting the enemy, and less tolerance for officers who failed to perform.

The first large-scale test of Vietnamization was the South Vietnamese incursion into Laos in 1971. Individual South Vietnamese units performed reasonably well, but the operation was hindered by deficiencies in advanced technical skills, particularly the use of air support. South Vietnamese personnel on the ground often failed to direct air strikes onto the intended targets, and in some cases hit friendly forces by mistake. The incursion caused serious harm to the North Vietnamese and disrupted their plans for an offensive that year, but also resulted in large South Vietnamese casualties and losses of equipment.

An even bigger and more momentous test occurred in the spring of 1972, with the launch of North Vietnam's so-called Easter Offensive. By this point in time, the United States had removed all of its ground forces from South Vietnam, leaving the South Vietnamese armed forces to face the formidable North Vietnamese Army on their own, albeit with support from U.S. military advisers and American aircraft. Because of the difficulties encountered by South Vietnamese personnel in directing air strikes during the Laotian operation, American advisers assumed responsibility for forward air controlling.

The North Vietnamese attacked in three parts of the country with a total of fourteen divisions, a far larger force than anything seen in the Afghan war. Given the many criticisms that had been leveled against the South Vietnamese Army by its detractors in the United States, one would have expected the South Vietnamese to have folded at this point. In a few places, South Vietnamese units did indeed surrender or disintegrate without putting up much of a fight. But at the critical points of battle, South Vietnamese units held their ground and, with American air support, kept the North Vietnamese from seizing their main objectives. South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu replaced commanders who were showing themselves to be ineffective, which

shored up the defenses in the most precarious sectors. After several months of fighting, the South Vietnamese drove the North Vietnamese back throughout the country.

A number of commentators downplayed the significance of South Vietnam's repulse of the Easter Offensive, contending that the South Vietnamese prevailed only because of American air power. That assertion was unfair. Fourteen divisions cannot be defeated with air power alone. South Vietnamese infantrymen displayed considerable skill and resolve, and they often had to rely on small arms to defeat the North Vietnamese at close range. When American ground forces had fought the North Vietnamese earlier in the war, they too had relied heavily on air power, both to move troops and to smash the enemy. Only through air power was it possible to offset North Vietnam's huge strategic advantages—the sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia, freedom of concealed movement up and down South Vietnam's long western border, and massive Chinese and Soviet aid.

Vietnam – The Final Act

North Vietnam was not able to mount another large offensive until 1975. This time they assembled an even larger force, numbering more than half a million men. The South Vietnamese, meanwhile, had been badly debilitated by the behavior of the U.S. Congress in the intervening years. At the start of 1973, in seeking South Vietnamese acceptance of the Paris peace agreement, President Nixon had secretly promised President Thieu that America would come to South Vietnam's rescue with air power in the event of a major North Vietnamese attack. Watergate, however, forced Nixon's resignation in 1974, and the U.S. Congress prohibited his successor, President Gerald Ford, from fulfilling that promise. Congress also slashed funding to the South Vietnamese armed forces during 1974. In the middle of that year, Major General John E. Murray, the head of the Defense Attaché Office in Saigon, reported that South Vietnam would face serious trouble in defending itself if the United States reduced the annual aid total to \$750 million. If the level were reduced to \$600 million, then the United States might as well "write off [South Vietnam] as a bad investment and a broken promise." In August, the U.S. Congress slashed aid to \$500 million. Thieu pleaded with President Ford and American Congressmen to restore aid to earlier levels, but to no avail.

By the fall of 1974, South Vietnam's stocks of fuel and ammunition were approaching perilous levels. In October, the South Vietnamese Joint General Staff directed all commanders to reduce their military operations in order to conserve fuel and ammunition. This order reduced the ability of the South Vietnamese to find and engage the enemy before they reached their intended targets, a critical blow to South Vietnam's defensive capabilities.

At the start of 1975, the South Vietnamese military boasted an impressive roster of commanders. The four corps commanders had excellent records as combat leaders, as did most of the division commanders. But material resources count for more in conventional war than in counterinsurgency, and the South Vietnamese Army simply did not have them.

The final offensive began with an attack on the capital of Phuoc Long province. The North Vietnamese used this thrust to test whether the United States would respond with its air power. When the United States did not lift a finger, Hanoi went for broke.

Given the hopelessness of the situation, it is surprising that South Vietnamese forces fought with as much resolve as they did. Nearly all South Vietnamese commanders remained with their units to the end. Those who were not killed in the fighting or did not commit suicide at the time of the surrender were either executed or imprisoned in reeducation camps. Their suffering ranks high among the many shameful legacies of the Vietnam War.

Afghan National Security Forces – Leadership Development

Afghanistan's history of leadership development is far different from South Vietnam's. In the latter stages of the Vietnam War, South Vietnamese forces could point to three decades of nearly continuous leadership development, a far cry from current conditions in the Afghan national security forces. In the decade of chaos and oppression between the fall of the Najibullah regime in 1992 and the ejection of the Taliban at the end of 2001, concerted leadership development in Afghanistan was virtually nonexistent. When Hamid Karzai came to power in 2001, he could summon the assistance of older military officers who had received training in the 1980s and early 1990s at schools organized or run by the Soviets, but he lacked professional junior officers. Not until 2004 did the new Afghan government and its NATO allies develop robust training and education capabilities for the Afghan National Army (ANA). If you look at the Afghan National Army today, you will find some competent senior officers who went through the Soviet-era system, a lot of good junior officers who went through the Karzai-era system, and a yawning gap in between. This gap has made it very difficult to find suitable leaders at the battalion level, the most critical level of command in this type of war.

The Afghan National Army is, for all its problems, considerably better off than the Afghan National Police (ANP). After the fall of the Taliban, the Afghan and NATO governments took nearly a decade to put together a viable large-scale training system for Afghan police officers. Initially, responsibility for police training was given to the German government, which concentrated on producing high-quality leaders but produced very few of them. After a few years, the U.S. government stepped in, ordering its Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) to facilitate the mass production of Afghan policemen. Hiring large numbers of American contractors to serve as trainers, INL generated a lot of quantity, but very little quality. The situation was not rectified until 2010, with the transition of police training to the military-led NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan. The NTM-A leadership assigned more and better personnel to police training and lengthened ANP leadership development courses, though these courses were still not long enough, in my opinion. Pressure from higher authorities to expand the size of the police rapidly has remained an impediment to the prolonged training that is necessary to produce high-caliber police leaders.

Afghan National Security Force Leadership Post-2014

At the end of 2014, when the Afghan government is scheduled to assume full responsibility for security, the Afghan National Army will be in decent shape. By that time it will possess substantial numbers of officers with ten years of experience, with whom it can fill battalion command slots. ANA infantry units are already reasonably good in many instances, owing to strong leadership at the company and platoon levels. The biggest weaknesses for the ANA will be in combat enabling functions, such as logistics and maintenance. NTM-A has worked diligently to improve Afghan capabilities in these areas, but educational and cultural barriers have retarded

the rate of progress, as they have in most of the other non-Western countries where Western militaries have engaged in advanced security assistance.

The Afghan National Police, with only five years of legitimate leadership development under its belt when the end of 2014 arrives, will face much more difficult challenges. The Afghan government is seeking to alleviate the shortage of experienced leaders by transferring some veteran military officers into police chief positions, but as yet this approach has not yielded dramatic results. Further complicating matters is the renewal of international demands to remove the ANP from the counterinsurgency business and focus it on the sort of policing that takes place in peaceful first-world countries. Such a change in mission would require new training, at a time when police training capacity is already overstretched. Its success would also be contingent on drastic reductions in insurgent activity by the end of 2014, a highly unlikely turn of events given the current security situation, the withdrawal of NATO forces, and the persistence of insurgent sanctuaries in Pakistan. Civilian police models that work in peacetime do not work in wartime, a lesson that was learned in Vietnam in the early 1960s and has already been relearned in Iraq and Afghanistan. A beat cop with a pistol is no match for a squad of insurgents bearing assault rifles. I therefore strongly recommend that the ANP retain robust paramilitary capabilities.

Afghan National Security Forces – Leadership Selection

The influence of factors other than merit has been much stronger in Afghanistan's personnel systems than it ever was in South Vietnam's. From the outset, nepotism, cronyism, tribalism, ethnicity, and bribery have influenced the selection of leaders in the Afghan security forces and nearly everywhere else in the government. In recent years, senior U.S. and Afghan officials have attempted to impose merit-based hiring on the Afghan ministries, and have achieved some successes, particularly in the army. But incompetent or predatory individuals continue to hold many critical offices.

President Karzai plays an informal but very large role in personnel decisions. At times, he has overridden the appointments made by ministers who sought to make merit the top job criterion. The outcome of the next Afghan presidential election will be crucial for that reason, among others.

Transition and Afghan Will

Proponents of rapid U.S. troop withdrawals from Afghanistan have argued that Afghan forces will improve once they no longer can rely on the crutch of the U.S. forces. As mentioned above, South Vietnam's armed forces did, in fact, improve late in the war for that reason. At the local level, transition of responsibility from NATO to Afghan forces has thus far resulted in better Afghan performance in some locales, and complete Afghan failure in others. Of greatest import, though, is what happens at the national level, where all of the local commanders are selected and managed. To date, transition does not seem to have stimulated improvements in Afghan performance at the national level.

In South Vietnam, the increase in self-sufficiency was facilitated by the presence of national leaders who were committed first and foremost to ensuring the nation's survival. In this regard, the country benefitted from a lack of deep ethnic, tribal, and religious cleavages. Such

dedicated nationalism has been lacking at the very top of the Afghan government. Although some of the Afghan cabinet ministers have performed reasonably well, ethnic and tribal rivalries and massive corruption have too often take precedence over the national interest in top-level Afghan decision-making.

The situation in Afghanistan today more closely resembles the Iraq War in 2005 and 2006 than the Vietnam War in any of its phases. In Iraq, it may be recalled, the national government was in those years more concerned with empowering Shiites and oppressing Sunnis than with defeating the insurgents. When the Americans tried to bolster Iraqi self-sufficiency by reducing American participation, the Iraqi security forces either avoided battle, attacked the wrong people, or suffered humiliating military defeats. General David Petraeus saved the day in 2007 by increasing rather than decreasing American participation.

Afghanistan's Security Force Requirements

Afghanistan is never going to come under attack from fourteen enemy divisions, because none of the Afghan insurgent groups will be able to marshal anywhere near that amount of fighting power, even with the assistance of Pakistan. But they don't need huge forces to overthrow the government. Earlier in the war, before the U.S. military's presence in Afghanistan dwarfed those of the other NATO militaries, insurgents used small-scale violence and intimidation to take control of large amounts of territory, including much of the critical city of Kandahar. If the insurgents start regaining wide swathes of land in the south and east in 2015, they will develop a psychological momentum that will be very difficult to halt. Under such circumstances, some government commanders would probably avoid attacking the insurgents or even switch over to their side, as occurred when the Taliban came to power in the 1990s. Those commanders would undoubtedly be ethnic Pashtuns, which would heighten longstanding fears among Afghanistan's ethnic minorities of a Pashtun conspiracy to oppress them, resulting quite possibly in the ethnic splintering of the Afghan security forces and the onset of ethnic civil war.

In the event of an insurgent resurgence after 2014, the Taliban, Haqqani Network, and other Pashtun extremists would likely end up with control of at least southern and eastern Afghanistan. Some of these groups have recently renounced international terrorism in public, but I think we should be as suspicious of such pronouncements as we should have been of Ho Chi Minh's claims that he did not like the Chinese, who turned out to have been his staunchest allies. If Afghan insurgents regain control of southern and eastern Afghanistan, chances are good that they will reopen these areas to Al Qaeda and other international terrorists and deprive the United States of many of the counterterrorist assets that it currently employs against terrorists located in Pakistan.

Maintaining large and capable Afghan national security forces far into the future should therefore be a top U.S. strategic priority. Funding for these forces will have to come from the United States and other foreign countries until Afghanistan's geological wealth can be tapped. Progress will be slower and less efficient than we would like, but the Afghan government now has human capital of sufficient skill and dedication to ensure that the investment will not simply be wasted.

The Afghan Local Police program can play an important role in securing the countryside. Many Afghan communities would rather provide their own security than have Afghans from

elsewhere provide it, given the country's sad history of outsiders abusing local communities. But the program's limited size—a total of 12,000 members have been recruited—and the Afghan government's plans for eventual merger of the local police into the national police mean that it cannot be a large-scale substitute for national security forces.

Aid Levels

Among the most disturbing parallels between Vietnam and Afghanistan is the reduction in American assistance resulting from war fatigue among some politicians and segments of the public. In Afghanistan as in Vietnam, more than a decade of bloodshed in combination with the reluctance of American political leaders to rally the country for war has eroded American support for military aid. Now as then, the survival of America's ally is widely viewed as dependent on American assistance, so reductions in assistance demoralize America's friends and embolden its enemies. And sharp reductions in American aid today can ensure our ally's ultimate defeat just as they did in 1974.

Although Afghanistan doesn't need armed forces capable of fending off a massive conventional adversary, it does need large quantities of trucks, fuel, radios, and machine guns. It must also keep paying the salaries of several hundred thousand people in the army and police. The Najibullah regime was ultimately overthrown because the loss of Soviet aid forced it to stop paying the salaries of some of its forces, the commanders of which then turned their units against the regime.

This spring, the U.S. government pledged its commitment to the long-term security of Afghanistan through the U.S.-Afghan Strategic Partnership Agreement and the Chicago Summit Declaration. Vietnam tells us that such promises are no guarantee of an enduring partnership. Continuing to provide aid will not save the recipient if the aid levels are cut too far.

The Obama administration has already announced plans to reduce funding for ANSF to \$4.1 billion after 2014, down from current levels of \$6 billion, and waning American and European enthusiasm for foreign aid could result in steeper cuts in the future. In conjunction with the funding reductions, the United States is prodding the Afghan government to shrink projected ANSF strength from the previously planned 352,000 to 230,000 by 2015. Barring vast and improbable improvements in the security situation between now and the end of 2014, such cuts in Afghan force size, in tandem with the departure of most NATO troops, will put Afghanistan in grave danger. Afghan Minister of Defense Wardak made this point earlier this year when talk of the cuts surfaced. "Going lower [in Afghan troop numbers] has to be based on realities on the ground," he warned. "Otherwise it will be a disaster, it will be a catastrophe, putting at risk all that we have accomplished together with so much sacrifice in blood and treasure."

Residual U.S. Military Presence

Retention of some U.S. forces in Afghanistan beyond 2014 could help deter a violent insurgent takeover or an ethnic civil war. It would definitely give the United States greater influence over the Afghan government and a greater ability to conduct counter-terrorist activities in the country than would be the case if all U.S. troops were withdrawn. The loss of U.S. influence

and capabilities in Iraq after the withdrawal of all remaining U.S. military personnel in late 2011 has shown how important even a small force can be.

As Vietnam demonstrated, however, a U.S. military presence alone cannot guarantee a country's safety. Our nation's adversaries have on a number of occasions launched provocative attacks attacking in a country where our troops were stationed based on the assumption that the American forces would abandon the country rather than fight to the bitter end. At times, their predictions have been correct, as for instance in Lebanon and Somalia, where we withdrew 1,800 and 5,000 troops, respectively, after coming under attack. In Vietnam, the Communists attacked when U.S. commitments were much larger. During late 1964, at which time Hanoi's leaders ordered a conventional offensive aimed at conquering South Vietnam, the United States had 23,000 troops in the country. When the offensive began in earnest in May 1965, U.S. troop strength had reached 50,000. At the start of Hanoi's 1972 Easter Offensive, the U.S. military had 69,000 advisory and support personnel in South Vietnam.

Even in the present era, with civilian contractors performing many support functions that were performed by military personnel in earlier times, U.S. military forces in hostile environments require large numbers of uniformed support personnel. Every rifleman is backed by truck drivers, aircraft mechanics, radio operators, doctors, logisticians, staff officers, and a host of others. In the case of Afghanistan, moreover, the U.S. military will need to maintain substantial numbers of uniformed advisers to the ANSF after 2014 if we wish to keep Afghanistan on our side, given the enduring deficiencies in ANA enablers and ANP leadership. Consequently, maintaining a force of between 5,000 to 10,000 Americans after 2014, which appears to be the administration's current plan, will not provide the United States with significant combat capabilities. Retaining the ability to foil a major offensive will require a much larger force. Our enemies recognize this truth, so our ability to discourage them from mounting such an offensive and our ability to draw them into peace negotiations also depend on maintenance of a large U.S. military presence.

Congress can play an important role in securing Afghanistan's future by seeking greater clarity from the administration on long-term troop commitments and encouraging maintenance of a large force after 2014. Such a force would engage in advice, support, and counterterrorist activities, and would also be capable of coming to the rescue of the ANSF in a major emergency. I believe that the American people are willing to support a prolonged commitment of this type, particularly since it would not involve large numbers of U.S. casualties, much as they supported the presence of U.S. personnel in Vietnam in 1972. All that is necessary is for the Congress and, more importantly, the administration to tell the public with deep conviction why we must persevere.



Dr. Mark Moyer is an independent national security consultant and author. He previously served as Kim T. Adamson Chair of Insurgency and Terrorism at the U.S. Marine Corps University. An expert on counterinsurgency, leadership, military history, and foreign policy, he speaks frequently to military officers and civilian officials at all levels. His books include *A Question of Command: Counterinsurgency from the Civil War to Iraq* (Yale University Press, 2009); *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965* (Cambridge University Press, 2006); and *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey: Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism in Vietnam* (Naval Institute Press, 1997, and University of Nebraska Press, 2007). Dr. Moyer's writings have appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and many other publications. He holds a B.A. summa cum laude from Harvard and a Ph.D. from Cambridge.

Triumph Forsaken, one of the most-discussed histories of the past decade, has been the subject of an academic conference and the book *Triumph Revisited: Historians Battle for the Vietnam War* (Routledge, 2010). Dr. Moyer is presently working on the sequel, which covers the remaining years of the war. *A Question of Command* ranks among the most original and influential works on counterinsurgency in recent years. General Sir David Richards, Chief of the General Staff in the UK, has written, "It is rare to read a book which combines academic excellence with such timely advice on a question of national importance. Mark Moyer has achieved this in his penetrating examination of leadership. . . . His perceptive analysis will have enduring value on both sides of the Atlantic for military commanders, policy-makers and historians alike

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INSTRUCTION TO WITNESSES: Rule 11, clause 2(g)(5), of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives for the 112th Congress requires nongovernmental witnesses appearing before House committees to include in their written statements a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source of any federal contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants) received during the current and two previous fiscal years either by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness. This form is intended to assist witnesses appearing before the House Armed Services Committee in complying with the House rule. Please note that a copy of these statements, with appropriate redactions to protect the witness's personal privacy (including home address and phone number) will be made publicly available in electronic form not later than one day after the witness's appearance before the committee.

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Capacity in which appearing: (check one)

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Representative

If appearing in a representative capacity, name of the company, association or other entity being represented:

FISCAL YEAR 2011

federal grant(s)/ contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant
		0	

FISCAL YEAR 2010

federal grant(s)/ contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant
		0	

FISCAL YEAR 2009

Federal grant(s)/ contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant
		0	

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Number of contracts (including subcontracts) with the federal government:

Current fiscal year (2011): 0 ;
 Fiscal year 2010: 0 ;
 Fiscal year 2009: 0 .

Federal agencies with which federal contracts are held:

Current fiscal year (2011): NA ;
 Fiscal year 2010: NA ;
 Fiscal year 2009: NA .

List of subjects of federal contract(s) (for example, ship construction, aircraft parts manufacturing, software design, force structure consultant, architecture & engineering services, etc.):

Current fiscal year (2011): NA ;
 Fiscal year 2010: NA ;
 Fiscal year 2009: NA .

Aggregate dollar value of federal contracts held:

Current fiscal year (2011): 0 ;
 Fiscal year 2010: 0 ;
 Fiscal year 2009: 0 .

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Number of grants (including subgrants) with the federal government:

Current fiscal year (2011): _____ 0 _____ ;
Fiscal year 2010: _____ 0 _____ ;
Fiscal year 2009: _____ 0 _____ .

Federal agencies with which federal grants are held:

Current fiscal year (2011): _____ NA _____ ;
Fiscal year 2010: _____ NA _____ ;
Fiscal year 2009: _____ NA _____ .

List of subjects of federal grants(s) (for example, materials research, sociological study, software design, etc.):

Current fiscal year (2011): _____ NA _____ ;
Fiscal year 2010: _____ NA _____ ;
Fiscal year 2009: _____ NA _____ .

Aggregate dollar value of federal grants held:

Current fiscal year (2011): _____ 0 _____ ;
Fiscal year 2010: _____ 0 _____ ;
Fiscal year 2009: _____ 0 _____ .

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Subcommittee

Statement of Joseph J. Collins

Professor, National War College

National Defense University

Before the House Armed Services Committee,
Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee

Hearing on Afghanistan: Historical Lessons

On July 18, 2012

The statement that follows is the personal opinion and assessment of the author and not a statement of the policy or assessment of the National Defense University, the Department of Defense, or any other element of the United States government.

Executive Summary

The Soviet Union fought a disastrous war in Afghanistan, but its invasion and withdrawal were effective and successful operations. Up to 1985, Soviet strategy was to hold the major centers of communications, limit infiltration, and destroy local strongholds at minimum costs to Soviet forces. In essence, the Soviet strategy was one where high technology, superior tactical mobility, and firepower were used to make up for an insufficient number of troops and to hold Soviet casualties to a minimum. Their war against the entire Afghan nation was in essence a very different war than the smaller, more legitimate conflict being waged by the 50 nations of ISAF and the elected government of Afghanistan against the Taliban and its supporters.

In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev became the Soviet leader and soon decided to end the war, which, he said, had become a “bleeding wound.” He replaced the ineffective Afghan leadership, effectively used his diplomatic tools, and had the Soviet military help the Afghans develop an effective transition, withdrawal, and force development plan.

The key elements of the Soviet transition were:

- A clear transition plan with military, foreign aid, and diplomacy generally pulling in the same direction;
- A reinvigorated host government with effective --- if not at times brutal --- leadership;
- Improved relations between Kabul, local power centers, and tribal militias; A stronger, more cohesive Afghan government fighting force; and
- Up to the demise of the Soviet Union in December 1991, a reliable and generous source of foreign aid.

The Najibullah regime lasted for three years after the Soviet withdrawal. It folded in 1992, a few months after the Soviet Union itself disappeared. After the departure of Soviet troops, Afghanistan went from a war against an invader to a civil war, which came to a decisive --- but not final --- phase, when radical Taliban force seized Kabul in 1996. Soon after the Soviet withdrawal, the United States left the fight, well before the war ended. U.S. neglect after 1991 left the management of the conflict solely in the hands of Pakistan. This facilitated the advent of the Taliban, the development of an al Qaeda position of strength, and ultimately, the 9/11 attacks on the United States.

Testimony

Chairman Wittman, Congressman Cooper, and Members of the Committee:

The Soviet invasion in late December 1979 was a well-executed operation. Previously infiltrated commandos moved on the palace and killed President Hafizullah Amin and his entourage. Soviet paratroopers seized major bases in and around the capital. Two motorized rifle divisions, filled with reservists from the Central Asia Republics --- one from Termez in the north central region and one from Kushka in the west --- brought the number of Soviet troops to 50,000 by the end of the first week of January 1980. Over time, the reservists would be withdrawn and the Soviet force increased to 130,000. (1)

Babrak Karmal, the Soviet-picked successor to the assassinated Hafizullah Amin, was not successful in unifying the government. The Afghan soldiers who did not desert continued to perform poorly, just as the resistance --- energized by the invasion --- moved into high gear. Soviet forces were not trained for counterinsurgency and, lacking recent experience in mountain warfare, did not perform well in the Afghan environment. Later, Soviet forces would move in large-scale operations to clear areas of strong mujahidin elements. They rarely held areas in the countryside and never tried to govern them systematically. They did not see their mission as one of protecting the population, nor did they exercise much care in the area of civilian casualties or collateral damage. Brutality toward insurgents and their supporters was part of their policy. Afghan refugees increased along with international outrage.

Soviet military efforts were hampered by slow learning within the Soviet Armed Forces. It would take five years before they began agile strike operations with air assault and airborne forces. A second problem was international isolation and significant support for the insurgents. The invasion of Afghanistan was a heinous act and even East European and Cuban communists were slow to help. China and the United States kept up a drumbeat of criticism. The United States instituted a grain embargo and boycotted the Moscow Olympics. Third, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United States --- usually working through Pakistani intelligence --- came to the aid of the mujahidin, who

maintained sanctuaries in Pakistan. During the second Reagan Administration, the mujahidin were provided with shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles which took a serious toll on Soviet aircraft. At its height, U.S. aid to the mujahidin --- nearly all distributed by Pakistani intelligence --- rose to \$400 million per year. (2) Saudi Arabia reportedly matched our aid, dollar for dollar.

The deck was stacked against the Soviet military effort. As an avowedly atheist foreign power, it had allied itself with a hated Marxist regime, completely out of step with its own people. The government had no legitimacy and seemed determined in its first few years to alienate the population. The military tasks were daunting and the Soviet-installed Karmal government had little international support. Soviet and Afghan forces together had too few soldiers to control the countryside, so they limited themselves to sweeps, road security, or other clearing operations. The disunited but spirited mujahidin had a secure sanctuary in Pakistan and great amounts of international support.

Up to 1985, Soviet strategy was to hold the major centers of communications, limit infiltration, and destroy local strongholds at minimum costs to Soviet forces. In essence, the Soviet strategy was one wherein high technology, superior tactical mobility, and firepower were used to make up for an insufficient number of troops and to hold Soviet casualties to a minimum. In effect, Soviet policy was a combination of scorched earth and migratory genocide. (3) The deliberate creation of what became millions of refugees was a part of their policy.

In 1985, a new age dawned in the Soviet Union. Mikhail Gorbachev, a Communist reformer, became General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and leader of the sclerotic Soviet regime, which had buried three of its previous rulers in as many years. A dedicated communist, he set out to unleash his program of new thinking, democratization, openness, and restructuring on a Soviet Union that found it to be very strong medicine. The war in Afghanistan fit Gorbachev's transformational agenda, to borrow Stalin's phrase, "like a saddle fits a cow."

As he grappled for a way forward, Gorbachev allowed the Red Army a year to step up its fighting in Afghanistan. He provided extra resources to the 40th Army, and encouraged its experimentation. In 1986, in a token unilateral withdrawal, he authorized

the swapping out of heavy units for more *spetsnaz* (special operations forces) and infantry units. The USSR also pushed the reform of the Afghan Army.

With the stalemate continuing, Gorbachev in February 1986 at an important Party Congress announced that Afghanistan was a “bleeding wound” and stated his intention to Afghanize the war and pursue international negotiations to end the conflict. The Soviet Union moved quickly to shore up Afghan leadership. In May 1986, the increasingly ineffective Karmal was relieved, and the young and dynamic Najibullah --- a one-time medical student and the former head of the Secret Police ---- put in his place. He was not a man of scruples, but he was clever and got things done.

Najibullah tried to remove the communist taint from his government, changed the name of the governing party, and formed alliances with local militias, which created local ceasefires and alliances with over 130,000 tribesmen. This latter tactic paid great dividends. As the Soviet Army left the field in 1988 and 1989, many mujahidin and tribesmen felt that their work was done. The Soviet advisers and Najibullah’s cadres were successful in their last few years at building the Afghan Army, and other security forces, including a praetorian guard. Under the driving leadership of Najibullah, “the Ox,” all of these regime-favorable developments accelerated after the Soviet troop withdrawal.

For its part, the Soviet Union funded an increase in Afghan forces to over 300,000 personnel, more than half of whom were in the Ministry of Interior or the Khad, their intelligence service. The Afghan Air Force (AFA) was well taken care of, with 240 attack aircraft. (Today, the AFA has less than a dozen attack helicopters. Only a few dozen additional light attack, fixed wing aircraft are planned for the future.) By 1987, the USSR increased aid dramatically to over a billion dollars per year. In 1989, Soviet aid and equipment transfers amounted to over 2.5 billion dollars. In 1987, Afghan government casualties --- over 19,000 killed and wounded --- were nine times more than those suffered by the Soviet forces. In the two years of the withdrawal, 1988-89, the Afghans suffered 65,000 casualties, while the Soviet Union suffered less than 1,500. (4)

Gorbachev agreed in the Geneva Accords of 1988 to withdraw his forces --- then approximately 105,000 --- in about a year. The parties half-heartedly promised non-interference, non-intervention, and the return of refugees. Half of the Soviet forces were taken out by the summer of 1988. The Soviet Union completed the withdrawal of its

forces on schedule by February 1989. By the end of 1991, the United States stopped military aid to the mujahidin, but that did not prevent the insurgents from moving forward.

Most people thought that the war would end soon after the Soviet withdrawal. They were wrong. In the Spring of 1989, the premature mujahidin attack on Jalalabad was defeated by Najibullah's forces, but in 1991 the fighters seized Khost, a small, remote city, near the border in eastern Afghanistan. Factional fighting continued inside of Najibullah's government and there was a coup attempt in early 1990. In 1992, with the handwriting on the wall, General Dostam and the famed Uzbek Legion defected to the mujahidin.

Najibullah was able to continue fighting for three years after the Soviet departure. His regime, however, disappeared in 1992 a few months after Soviet aid money and supplies dried up. Najibullah was unable to escape. He took refuge in the UN compound in Kabul. Four years later, when the Taliban seized the capital, he was seized, tortured, and killed. The civil war continued after Najibullah stepped down, first as a war among the so-called Peshawar Seven groups, and then as a war between the rump of those groups and the Taliban. The civil war did not end when the Taliban seized Kabul in 1996. A part of the Northern Alliance, led by the valiant Ahmed Shah Massoud, continued to fight the Taliban in the north and east of Afghanistan right up to the American intervention in the Fall of 2001.

In all, the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan was a successful operation. While the situation today is vastly different, the keys to success are likely to be similar. Those keys to success were:

- A disunited, fractious enemy: the seven mujahidin groups;
- A clear transition plan with military, aid, and diplomacy generally pulling in the same direction;*
- A reinvigorated host government with effective --- if not brutal --- leadership;

* Both in the Soviet and American cases, the various departments had their favorites. The Soviet Armed Forces favored one Afghan faction, and the KGB, another. After the Soviet withdrawal, the U.S. Department of State and the CIA feuded over control of policy with the Agency clinging to its support of the mujahidin through the ISI, and the State Department favoring a more flexible approach toward more moderate groups, not favored by Pakistan

- Improved relations between Kabul and local power centers and tribal militias;
- A stronger, more cohesive Afghan government fighting force; and
- Up to the demise of the Soviet Union in December 1991, a reliable and generous source of foreign aid.

While the mujahidin ultimately defeated the abandoned Najibullah government, they proved the adage that the results of war are not permanent. The fight for freedom in Afghanistan did not end with the downfall of his government. It reached a decisive phase in 1996 when the radical Taliban movement, backed by Pakistan, captured Kabul and most of the major urban areas. Sadly, the great work that the United States did in helping the Afghans fight the Soviet Union came to a dysfunctional end. In late 1991, the United States stopped its support of the mujahidin and by then, had also turned its back on Pakistan in a dispute over nuclear proliferation. In effect, guided by war weariness and other priorities, such as nuclear non-proliferation, the U.S. team left the field before the end of the game. With Pakistani help, the Taliban seized Afghanistan in 1996 and then fell in with Usama bin Laden and his al Qaeda cadres. Before long, Afghanistan was the world leader in only one thing: support for international terrorism. The United States paid for its abandonment of the mujahidin on September 11, 2001.

Finally, it is important to deal with a misperception that one often hears. Some pundits --- both American and Russian --- see the United States today in the same boat as the USSR in Afghanistan in the 1980s: two superpowers bogged down in the “graveyard of empires,” destined to meet the same fate. (5) This actually overestimates the effects of defeats in Afghanistan on Great Britain and the Soviet Union. While the “graveyard of empires” is an important warning, it should not be taken as a literal prediction for the United States and its coalition partners. (6) There are many surface parallels and potential lessons, but the essence of the Soviet and American policy and operations in Afghanistan were very different. (7)

The United States is a superpower, but it is not an empire. It does not need to occupy countries, or replicate American governmental structures or its political ideology to accomplish its long-term goals. In Afghanistan, after having been attacked by resident terrorists, the United States came to the aid of combatants fighting an unpopular government, recognized by only three countries in the world. We did not kill any of our

allies and replace them with puppets during the invasion. Soviet policy forced five million Afghans into exile, while the United States created conditions where the vast majority of them have returned.

In one sense, both the United States and the Soviet Union were unprepared for a protracted insurgency in Afghanistan. The Soviet Union, however, fought a nation in arms. When necessary, it unleashed a punishing fury in the countryside. War crimes and illegal punitive operations were daily occurrences. There was no talk about protecting the population; Soviet operations were all about protecting the regime and furthering Soviet control in Afghanistan. Today, the United States has in large measure adapted to the insurgency and is working hard to protect the people, who are being besieged by the lawless Taliban, itself a purveyor of war crimes and human rights violations.

Fighting alone, the Soviet Union's enemy in Afghanistan was the whole nation, defended by over 170,000 mujahidin. Today, the United States and its coalition partners --- 50 of them in 2012 --- are fighting an extremist, religious minority group of no more than 25,000 adherents whose national approval ratings rarely poll higher than 10 percent. (8) Finally, the Soviet Union fought to secure an authoritarian state with an alien ideology, while the United States and its allies are trying to build a stable state with democratic aspirations, where people have basic freedoms and a claim on prosperity. In its beleaguered state, the Karzai regime has much more legitimacy than the Afghan communists ever did. Beyond the locale of the conflict, the importance of sanctuaries, and some tactical dynamics, there are not a lot of similarities between the essence of the Soviet Union's conflict and the war being fought by ISAF's 50 nations in Afghanistan.

In the end, the Soviet experience in Afghanistan cost 14,000 Soviet and a million Afghan lives, created a huge Afghan diaspora, left tens of millions of mines on the ground in Afghanistan, and hastened the end of the Soviet Union. It did not create a better peace. In fact, it did not create a peace at all. The United States has the potential to do much better, but only if it perseveres in the pursuit of a stable Afghanistan and our interests in the region. We must not again leave the field before the game is over.

Endnotes

1. Some sources put the highest Soviet troop strength at 115,000. On invasion and subsequent fighting, see Joseph Collins, *The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan* (Lexington Books, 1986), pp. 77-164; Henry Bradsher, *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1983), pp.169-239; and on Soviet tactics, Lester Grau, ed., *The Bear Went over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1995); and on mujahidin tactics, Ali Ahmad Jalali and Lester Grau, *The Other Side of the Mountain: Mujahidin Tactics in the Soviet-Afghan War* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Combat Development Command, 1998)
2. Bruce Reidel, *Deadly Embrace: Pakistan, America, and the Future of the Global Jihad* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2011), p. 27.
3. Joseph Collins, *The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan*, p. 145.
4. Data on Soviet withdrawal from various sources cited in David Fivecoat, "Leaving the Graveyard: The Soviet Union's Withdrawal from Afghanistan," an unpublished paper from the National War College, May 2012. For a précis of all of the Peshawar Seven groups, see Larry Goodson, *Afghanistan's Endless War: State Failure, Regional Politics, and the Rise of the Taliban* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2001), pp. 189-93.
5. See, for an example, Artemy Kalinovsky, "Afghanistan is the New Afghanistan," *Foreign Policy*, September 2009 at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/09/04/afghanistan_is_the_new_afghanistan. Kalinovskiy 's new book is considered one of the best works on the Moscow-level decision-making to end the war. Artemy Kalinovskiy, *A Long Goodbye: The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).
6. Two excellent books about contemporary war in Afghanistan use "graveyard of empires" in their titles. David Isby, *Afghanistan, Graveyard of Empires: A New History of the Borderlands* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2010); and Seth Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009).
7. There are also articles trumpeting the Vietnam-Afghanistan parallel. For one example, see Tom Johnson and M. Chris Mason, "Saigon 2009," *Foreign Policy*, August 20, 2009, at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/08/20/saigon_2009 . The Vietnam analogy does not carry water when the scope and scale of the conflict are taken into account. Another anomalous item in that comparison is the salience of Soviet and Chinese security assistance and the existence of a massive and highly professional North Vietnamese Army. This modern, mechanized army was the final instrument of defeat for the South Vietnamese government, not indigenous South Vietnamese guerrillas. There is no such factor in the current conflict in Afghanistan.

8. Brookings, *Afghanistan Index*, October 2010, Figure 4.12 shows Taliban approval ratings totaling 10 percent. See <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/Programs/FP/afghanistan%20index/index.pdf>. The strength of today's Taliban is the author's estimate, based on conversations with various intelligence analysts. On current Taliban troop strength, see the Associated Press story: Slobodan Lekic, "Taliban Numbers Unaffected by Allied Troop Surge," *Boston Globe*, January 7, 2010 at http://www.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2011/01/07/taliban_numbers_unaffected_by_allied_troop_surge/.

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Dr. Joseph J. Collins joined the National War College faculty in 2004 as Professor of National Security Strategy.

Prior to this assignment, Dr. Collins served for three years as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Stability Operations, the Pentagon's senior civilian official for peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and stabilization and reconstruction operations. His team led the stability operations effort in Afghanistan. From 1998-2001, he was a Senior Fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, where he did research on economic sanctions, military culture, and national security policy.

In 1998, Dr. Collins retired from the U. S. Army as a Colonel after nearly 28 years of military service. His Army years were equally divided among infantry and armor assignments in the United States, South Korea, and Germany; teaching at West Point in the Department of Social Sciences; and a series of assignments in the Pentagon. His Washington assignments included: Army Staff Officer for NATO and Warsaw Pact strategic issues, Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff of the Army, Military Assistant to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy during *Operation Desert Storm*, and Special Assistant and Chief Speechwriter to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Dr. Collins has also taught as adjunct faculty in the graduate divisions of Columbia University and Georgetown Universities.

He is a life member of the Council on Foreign Relations and holds a doctorate in Political Science from Columbia University. He is also an honor graduate of the Army's Command and General Staff College and holds a diploma from the National War College. Dr. Collins's many publications include books and articles on the Soviet war in Afghanistan, *Operation Desert Storm*, contemporary U.S. military culture, defense transformation, and homeland defense. His recent publications include an NDU INSS occasional paper, "Choosing War: The Decision to Invade Iraq and Its Aftermath," and a book, *Understanding War in Afghanistan*, published by the NDU Press in July 2011. He writes frequently for *Armed Forces Journal* and the national security experts' blog of the *National Journal*.

TESTIMONY

Security Force Development in Afghanistan

Learning from Iraq

OLGA OLIKER

CT-378

July 2012

Testimony presented before the House Armed Services Committee,
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations on July 18, 2012

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Olga Oliker¹
The RAND Corporation

Security Force Development in Afghanistan
*Learning from Iraq*²

Before the Committee on Armed Services
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
United States House of Representatives

July 18, 2012

Chairman Wittman, Ranking Member Cooper, and members of the Subcommittee, I am honored to be here today. I have been asked to address the historical experience of building Iraqi security forces and its applicability to current efforts build Afghan security forces as U.S. efforts in that country draw down. I will begin by providing a brief overview of security force development in Iraq, then discuss some of the parallels and differences between the two countries and the two efforts. I will conclude with some thoughts on what the experience in Iraq (and elsewhere) can and cannot teach us for Afghanistan.³

Security Force Development in Iraq

The effort to build Iraq's security development went through a number of iterations, although from the very start its goal was to develop forces that could provide for Iraq's security so that coalition forces would not have to. As you will recall, Iraq's Army and defense ministry had to be built from scratch after the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) disbanded both on May 23, 2003. The same was true of the intelligence service. However, the fact that the Ministry of Interior (Moi) and its police forces continued to exist, as did the courts and prisons, did not mean that the task of developing those forces and institutions was any easier. Instead, the effort to develop all of

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² This testimony is available for free download at <http://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT378.html>.

³ This testimony draws on a number of sources in addition to those cited, including Terrence K. Kelly, Nora Bensahel, and Olga Oliker, *Security Force Assistance in Afghanistan: Identifying Lessons for Future Efforts*, (Santa Monica: RAND, 2011); Nora Bensahel, Olga Oliker, Keith Crane, Richard R. Brennan, Jr., Heather S. Gregg, Thomas Sullivan, and Andrew Rathmell, *After Saddam: Prewar Planning and the Occupation of Iraq*, (Santa Monica: RAND, 2008); and Andrew Rathmell, Olga Oliker, Terrence Kelly, David Brannan, and Keith Crane, *Developing Iraq's Security Sector: The Coalition Provisional Authority's Experience*, (Santa Monica: RAND, 2005).

Iraq's security forces was a tremendously challenging one, forcing coalition advisors to repeatedly rethink their goals and assumptions.

The CPA vision was of a police force in the lead for internal security and a military force geared to defense from external threats. Interestingly, the concept was informed by the then-recent early experience of developing the Afghan National Army. But by spring 2004 it was clear that the Iraqi armed forces would have a domestic role (in the April 2004 Battle of Fallujah the Army's Second Battalion refused to fight). It was equally clear that the under-resourced police, which faced a tremendous shortage both of coalition advisors and of its own leadership capacity (the latter in part because of the de-Ba'athification policy put in place by the CPA), were not up to the task of a lead security role.

Eventually, the goal became to develop the Iraqi Army to both maintain internal security and to provide for external defense. The police was divided between the centralized Federal (formerly National) Police (FP), whose role is counterinsurgency, and the Iraqi Police Service (IPS), who are meant to maintain order locally. Both police and military training were in the hands of coalition military forces from March 2004 onwards, appropriate civilian financial and advisory resources having never materialized in the necessary quantities.

In addition to police and military forces, there exist a number of other armed government organizations, created at various times. In addition to the FP and IPS, the border forces, Facilities Protection Services, and Oil Police report to the MoI. The Iraqi military has air, naval, and counterterrorism structures within it. Agents of the Iraqi Intelligence Service and the Ministry of State for National Security Affairs are also armed. Finally, it is important to note that despite initial efforts to integrate Iraqi security forces from a regional and ethnic standpoint, the Kurdistan Regional Government, and before them the two major Kurdish political parties, has always controlled its own forces.

For the broad array of Ministry of Defense (MoD) and MoI forces, for which we have the best unclassified reporting, coalition personnel had consistent difficulty tracking the numbers of Iraqi forces on the job, reporting well into 2007 on the numbers trained and authorized, rather than present for duty. They knew that these numbers were inaccurate because there were many police on the job who had never received training, and many police and military personnel who had been trained but were no longer on the job, whether because they had died, been injured, quit, or gone AWOL. Tracking equipment also presented similar challenges—coalition forces knew how much had been provided, but not what was in service. This remained a consistent problem.

By 2007 basic training for both police and military units was carried out primarily by Iraqis. Coalition forces were assigned in advisory/transition teams to the Iraqi police and military forces, with whom they ideally ate, slept, and worked. Partnered operations between coalition and Iraqi units were an essential component of the collective training program. Beginning in 2009, U.S. Army Brigade Combat Teams, remissioned as Advised and Assist Brigades, formally took on the lead advisory role. At this time, partnered operations largely ceased. Instead, coalition forces provided key enablers, assisting Iraqi Army units in planning, troop leading procedures, maintenance, sustainment and effective use of tactical intelligence. A substantial advisory system was also in place for the relevant ministries, working to establish effective structures and systems. The transition teams for both military and police forces were predominantly military personnel, because of the continued lack of civilian police advisors. While efforts were made to use military police forces to work with Iraqi police units, this was recognized as an insufficient solution to the problem (though better than previous practice in which policing experience on the part of advisors was rare and accidental when it did happen). International Police Advisors (IPAs) were spread among the teams to provide some police presence. However, there were never enough training teams to cover the breadth of police forces. The police remained the second priority effort.

In all cases, systems and approaches imparted to the Iraqi security forces tended to be heavily based on U.S. (and to a lesser extent other coalition) military concepts, approaches, and doctrines. In some cases, doctrine was directly translated, including for police functions. Automation was also a substantial focus of institutional and enabling development, for instance for personnel and logistics systems.

Advisors and mentors embedded with the Iraqi forces were also responsible for evaluating their progress. Starting in 2005, the system in place for this was the Transition Readiness Assessments (TRAs), which rated units as fully capable, capable, partially capable and forming/incapable. Much of the reporting focused on numbers of personnel and equipment provided and available, and an inadequate number of embedded units to cover the police force meant that these reported numbers remained unreliable. Quantitative measures were supplemented by assessments of capability, based on coalition forces' observation of Iraqi forces in action. Variations on the TRA system, reported as operational readiness assessments, continued to be used through 2008, with increasing focus on capacity for independent action. In fall of 2008, the Iraqi Defense Ministry deployed its own operational readiness assessment system, the Quarterly Readiness and Strategic Review Process. Coalition forces also continued to carry out their own assessments, although these ceased to be reported in an unclassified format starting in 2009. A review of available assessments indicates continuing progress over time as more units are stood up and gain competence, although substantial gaps remained in

areas such as present-for-duty rates, equipment maintenance, and general policing capabilities. Military forces were consistently rated more capable than were police forces, and smaller components of the military, such as the Air Force and Navy, showed steady progress. Very few military or police units were assessed as "fully capable" without reliance on coalition enablers, however. Ministerial capabilities of both MoD and Mol were consistently described as improving, but never overcame substantial gaps in key areas, including basic competence, the fight against corruption, and their ability to assimilate coalition-provided systems. Progress was also consistently insufficient in the development of the justice infrastructure. Intelligence capacity is not publicly assessed, but DoD reports raise concerns about intelligence-sharing well into 2010.

Another key measure of effectiveness could be found in tracking whether or not a given region was ready for transition to Iraqi control. As of January 2009, however, Iraqi security forces were officially in the lead throughout Iraq as a matter of law, due to the expiration of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1790 and the entry into force of the U.S.-Iraq Security Agreement. Coalition forces remained highly active, however, and performed a range of enabling functions, as well as mentoring and advising. As U.S. forces prepared to depart Iraq, it was clear that far too few forces were meeting the standards for "fully capable." A new goal was therefore developed: "Minimum Essential Capability" (MEC). According to the Defense Department's final publicly available quarterly report to Congress on progress in Iraq, MEC is defined as a state such that "Iraqi security ministries, institutions, and forces can provide internal security and possess minimum foundational capabilities to defend against external threats."⁴ MEC was to be reached by the end of 2011, when U.S. forces were to be gone. As of now, it has yet to be attained, primarily because U.S. personnel do not judge Iraqi security forces adequate to defend against external threats.⁵

One more issue should be mentioned in the context of security force development in Iraq, and this is the Sons of Iraq or "Arab Awakening" movement. These terms refer to the decision in late 2006 and early 2007 by the coalition to work with Sunni tribal leaders, and later Sunni insurgent and various local leaders, who offered to provide fighters to the counterinsurgency effort, in exchange for payment and weapons. The Sons of Iraq manned checkpoints and performed other security functions. The decision by Sunni leaders to participate in this program was an important contributor to the reduction of violence in Iraq in 2007 and the program helped shrink the Sunni component of the insurgency dramatically. A small number of Shi'a were also brought into the Sol. In 2008, Iraq's leaders agreed that 10 percent of the Sons of Iraq would be integrated into the security forces. This figure later doubled, and some integration did take place. However,

⁴ U.S. Department of Defense, "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," July 2010.

⁵ Statement of the Department of Defense Before the Sub-Committee on National Security, Homeland Defense and Foreign Operations United States House of Representatives, October 12, 2011.

concerns remained that Awakening members might yet turn against the regime. More recently, some Awakening members have been targets of insurgent attacks while a number of movement leaders have been arrested.

Today, coalition forces have withdrawn. DoD retains a small advisory element and assistance to the police has been transferred to the U.S. Department of State. The Iraqi Army remains the most capable force in Iraq and its Air and Naval components are able to maintain their capabilities, even if concerns remain about their ability to maintain all of their equipment. The State Department effort to continue police development has been sharply criticized in both Iraq and the United States, and the police remain underdeveloped, as does the justice sector more broadly. I have no information on the development of the intelligence services.

Iraq and Afghanistan: Similarities and Differences

So, what can the experience in Iraq teach us about Afghanistan? The fact is that although the two countries are fairly dissimilar, security sector development efforts in both have had a number of similarities.

Before turning to the security force assistance effort, let us look first of all at what the two countries have in common. Both are, of course, multi-ethnic, predominantly Muslim countries. Both face challenges of ineffective and weak governance, high levels of corruption and an ineffective justice system. Security forces in both countries continue to suffer from infiltration by insurgents.

But the similarities belie many differences. Basic figures from the CIA's *World Factbook* present a stark contrast. 66 percent of Iraq's population lives in urban areas. Compare this to 23 percent of Afghanistan's (although urbanization is rising). A baby born in Iraq can be expected to live to age 70. One born in Afghanistan can be expected to barely reach 50. In 2000, 78.1 percent of Iraqis were literate, compared to only 28.1 percent of Afghans.⁶ Afghanistan has suffered conflict on its soil for decades, conflict that has devastated the vast majority of the country. Iraq's conflict with Iran, although lengthy and bloody, was limited geographically and ended in 1988. Iraq has a history of functional government and national security forces, even if biased and brutal. Afghanistan has no such history. Iraq's oil resources ensure that the state has the potential for substantial wealth and can afford to sustain its security forces. Afghanistan's economy remains highly dependent on the drug trade, and its mineral wealth will take tremendous time, investment, and effort to exploit, if it is ever to be exploited. It is therefore difficult to imagine an Afghanistan

⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, *World Factbook*, 2012

that is not heavily dependent on foreign assistance, including for support of its security forces. Furthermore, Iraq's literacy rates and wealth mean that its security forces can be relatively sophisticated – Afghanistan's security forces cannot be so. Iraq is an industrialized society. Afghanistan was thrown off that path several decades ago.

A few more things appear to be similar but are, in fact, quite different. Both countries exhibit substantial cleavages among their people, but the Sunni-Shia-Kurd split in Iraq and that country's tribal factions bear little resemblance to the ethnic and tribal divides of Afghanistan, which have fueled civil war for decades. Because of this, the shape of insurgency in the two countries is also very different. Moreover, although religious extremists had a role in the Iraqi insurgency, so did secular forces who sought to redress a power shift. The situation in Afghanistan is, of course, quite different.

Why do these differences matter? After all, there are common approaches to security sector assistance globally, and there should be transferrable best practices. This is true. However, a country's specific situation will determine both what its security needs are and what it is reasonable to expect from its security forces given capabilities and resources. Only some of the best practices identified in working with developed countries facing an external threat will have applicability to a resource-poor, largely illiterate country facing an internal threat, for example.

This said, there are a number of similarities specific to the requirements for security force assistance. Namely, in both Iraq and Afghanistan security force development has been geared to developing local forces to a level where they can maintain security sufficiently to support the departure of coalition forces. In both cases, this was done under challenging conditions, with a complex insurgency underway. Both situations have seen an evolution of goals and approaches, in part because of the development of insurgency, with the force structures that exist being at least in part a product of changing approaches over time. Despite initial goals for small armies focused on external defense in what were expected to be low threat environments, what has emerged in both cases are substantial armed forces with primarily internal security missions in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism contexts.

Other similarities of approach likely owe more to the fact that a U.S.-led coalition has been responsible for security force development in both countries, and that the two efforts proceeded simultaneously, with many of the same individuals involved. As a result, experiences in each theater informed efforts in the other. Specific approaches, from embedded transition teams to training methodologies, have been extremely similar. Even aspects of current efforts to both build

local Afghan forces and to identify paths to reintegration and reconciliation have been informed by the "Sons of Iraq" effort.

The shape of the coalition, its military nature, and the civilian resources and capabilities possessed by its members have also meant that in both Iraq and Afghanistan, despite talk about the primacy of police, military forces have developed more effectively and the development of the military has received better resourcing and more appropriate personnel than has development of police forces. In the meantime, just as hopes to build an army for external defense had to be changed in the face of insurgency, so were plans to develop capable community police, as those forces, too, took on more of a counterinsurgency mission in both countries.

Another important similarity is the challenge that coalition personnel have had assessing local capabilities. Early reporting in Iraq focused, as noted, on personnel trained rather than those present for duty. In both countries, coalition military personnel faced pressure to report progress in their security force assessments, and challenges gathering the data to report accurately. From a quantitative perspective, this means that assessments often reported numbers (of personnel, weapons, etc.) that a unit or organization was meant to have rather than what it did have.⁷ Perhaps even more important is the question of identifying the right standard by which to measure capability. How do we define "readiness" or even "minimum essential capability" in an Iraqi or Afghan context? In both countries we have seen coalition doctrine and evaluation standards utilized to less than ideal effect.

What Can We Learn?

Given the many differences between Iraq and Afghanistan, what should ISAF and the United States be taking from the Iraq experience (or, for that matter, from their own or others' experiences in Afghanistan), particularly as they prepare to draw down? A number of key areas can be highlighted, with both positive and negative lessons.

Before I turn to issues related to the building of traditional security forces, I would like to address the related question of helping to develop less regular forces, in part to promote political reconciliation. Specifically, this is the question of whether the Sunni Awakening experience can serve as an example for Afghanistan. Here I urge caution. While I agree that the Sons of Iraq movement was crucial to reducing violence in Iraq, I do not think that a similar approach will have the same effects in Afghanistan. Awakening leaders made a conscious choice to cease actively opposing the Iraqi government and the United States for their own political

⁷ In regards to Iraq, I have discussed this in "No Law and No Order," *Parliamentary Brief*, December 2006. In reference to Afghanistan, it is covered in Kelly, Bensahel, and Olikar.

reasons. Current efforts in Afghanistan, like the Village Stability Operations/Afghan Local Police programs are not comparable. They are focused not on turning insurgents and their supporters, but on spreading stability to rural areas. Further, it is not clear that even if reconciliation and reintegration efforts in Afghanistan, which are geared to convincing insurgents to change sides, were to scale up substantially, that you would have a similar dynamic. There is little sign that the relevant groups are genuinely interested in cooperation or would make reliable partners. In Afghanistan itself, similar efforts by the Soviets and their Afghan allies backfired when groups changed sides multiple times and/or took advantage of the weapons provided to pursue their own interests, including fighting one another. Eventually, these tribal militias became core fighting forces of Afghanistan's lengthy civil war. That experience is worth studying as various Afghan initiatives move forward. Among other things, it suggests that forces thus developed must remain small, defensive, and genuinely tied to formal forces.

Turning now to formal security force development, the first and most important issue I would like to raise is one of standards and evaluation. The very fact that the United States exports its own approaches when it provides assistance means that it evaluates its partners according to its own metrics. The United States is not alone in this—the Soviet experience developing SFA in Afghanistan showed similar proclivities. However, in both Iraq and Afghanistan, local institutions and organizations have had tremendous difficulty (if not disinterest) in taking such approaches on and there exist real questions regarding their relevance. Computerized systems for logistics and personnel management may be less valuable than paper-based accounting systems in a country with low literacy, limited connectivity and inconsistent electricity. One thing we have seen in both Iraq and Afghanistan is that while local leaders are willing to accept the equipment and training coalition advisors provide, they continue to maintain parallel systems to track information. Those are the systems they will use when foreigners are no longer there.

This is particularly important in the context of drawdown. In Iraq, when it became clear that initial goals could simply not be met by the time of withdrawal, coalition leaders adjusted standards to align with what they thought might actually be possible. Their initial goals had been based on measures reflecting coalition, primarily U.S., views of what forces should look like and do. They were developed with limited Iraqi input and it should not be surprising that they proved both unrealistic and unpalatable to Iraqis. Eventually, U.S. advisors deemed Iraqi security forces capable of meeting the country's internal security needs, albeit under less threatening conditions than had existed a few years before. But the confusion of standards means that what they are actually capable of is not entirely clear. In Afghanistan, I have heard the phrase "Afghan good-enough" used to suggest that current standards should be lowered, just as in Iraq, the prevalent phrase was "Iraqi good-enough." This is not the right formulation or the right approach. It

suggests that local forces should be able to do what U.S. forces can do, only not as well. Rather, both the Afghans and their assistance providers should think about what is actually necessary and possible in Afghanistan, given its security situation and its human and resource capabilities (including the support of the international community). That is not a matter of “good enough,” it is a matter of appropriate. U.S. systems are not what Afghanistan needs. Afghan systems, ideally ones developed by Afghans with coalition support, are what Afghanistan needs.

Unfortunately, defining what is appropriate in Afghanistan is a challenge. As the United States found in Iraq, and as both the U.S. and the Soviets found in Afghanistan,⁸ few countries will turn down equipment, training, or other assistance when it is offered and few leaders will not want the most modern systems, whether or not they can actually be used effectively. Thus, careful analysis, in consultation with Afghan partners, is needed, coupled with an understanding of how local forces and personnel actually fight, deploy, train, use equipment, and so forth. This can help define options that are, indeed, Afghanistan-appropriate. These options can then inform the effort to assist Afghanistan to develop its own approaches.

In this context, I also think that it is worth examining the benefits that can be derived from embedded trainers. It is my belief that the embedding trainers and partnering forces were used to good effect in Iraq and in Afghanistan. Although embedding did not turn Iraqi security forces into U.S. or coalition-style forces, it did provide an opportunity for U.S. personnel to model best practice behavior. Embedding and partnering also provide a better context for assessments—the closer one is to the host nation unit, the better one can understand how local personnel think about challenges and approaches. Indeed, embedding can help assistance providers better understand and measure what locally appropriate approaches to a problem might be. If this is then integrated into the development of assistance, it may be possible to implement systems that make more sense for the local environment.

The question of institution-building and corruption is also a crucial one in this regard. There is broad agreement that institution-building is key to developing effective security forces. There is also broad agreement that building effective institutions in countries plagued by conflict and corruption is a tremendous challenge. The trick here, I think, is accepting that truly overcoming corruption will take not only time, but genuine will on the part of local governments. Assistance cannot overcome disinterest, and indeed opposition, on the part of those in charge who benefit from the status quo. Part of determining what is Afghan-appropriate is accepting that some

⁸ For more on the Soviet experience building SFA in Afghanistan, see Olga Oliker, *Building Afghanistan's Security Forces in Wartime: The Soviet Experience*, (Santa Monica, RAND, 2011)

things will simply take generations, while others may be accomplished through policy and incentives.

Another important lesson of recent experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq lies in the area of police development and, more broadly, the justice sector overall. Militaries are not effective means of building the sorts of police forces that post conflict societies want and need. However, the United States and most of its allies lack the capacity to deploy substantial numbers of police trainers to develop police in their own image. Nor, as the military experience shows, is that necessarily the right approach. Today, as withdrawal looms, the United States and its partners should work with the Afghans to define what sort of police development can be realistically envisioned for Afghanistan, and devote resources and assistance to developing that into the future. The same holds true for the justice sector, without which no law and order can develop. This is a long-term proposition, and not one that can be resolved before forces are withdrawn.

Early efforts to build security forces in both Iraq and Afghanistan were limited and proved woefully inadequate. Those elements of the US government responsible for foreign security force development in 2001, the State Department in the case of police and the Special Operations community in the case of foreign militaries, were simply not scalable to the degree needed to build largely from scratch the security forces of two, or even one medium sized state. Nowhere in the US government was there the capacity or the expertise needed to build foreign security forces on the scale needed in either of these countries. Over time, as efforts in both countries scaled up capabilities were developed, although as noted, substantial gaps remained in regards to police development. It will be important, as the U.S. commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan wind down, that the expertise to conduct security force development on this scale now developed not be lost, that ways be found to fill the capability gaps that remain (such as for police development), and that an expandable capacity be retained somewhere in the US national security establishment, one capable of rapidly surging to fill such requirements should the need one day re-arise.

Finally, one of the key differences between Iraq and Afghanistan highlighted above is one of native resources. As I already noted, Iraq's energy wealth means that Iraq will be able to sustain its own forces. Afghanistan quite simply cannot afford the security forces it needs, even at a very minimal level. This means that if Afghanistan is to continue to maintain and develop its security forces, it will need continuing financial and security aid. Another lesson from the Soviet experience: Soviet advisors had a very low opinion of their Afghan counterparts. Many were convinced (as was the Afghan leadership) that Najibullah's government and forces would collapse soon after Soviet forces withdrew. In fact, they lasted until Soviet aid stopped, with the collapse of the USSR. There is reason to think that, despite the substantial concerns about the

quality and capability of Afghan security forces today, with continued resourcing, they are sufficient to at least continue to combat the present threat. The question is whether or not they will have that resourcing. The international community has pledged such aid, but pledges have to be met. Recent history in both Iraq and Afghanistan shows that what is delivered often falls substantially short of what is pledged.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to your questions.



OBJECTIVE ANALYSIS. EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS.



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Olga Oliker is a senior international policy analyst at the RAND Corporation. Oliker's areas of expertise include security sector reform in the conflict, post-conflict, and development contexts and U.S. and international efforts to advance reform in countries in transition. Regionally, her work has centered on the countries of the former Soviet Union as well as on Iraq, Afghanistan, and other countries throughout the world. Her current research focuses primarily on international relations and national security policy, particularly as regards countries in conflict and transition. Before coming to RAND in 1999, Oliker worked as an independent consultant and held positions in the U.S. Departments of Defense and Energy. Oliker received her B.A. in international studies from Emory University and her M.P.P. from the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

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1	U.S. Army	35,443,629	Arroyo Center
1	U.S. Air Force	45,549,423	Project Air Force

FISCAL YEAR 2010

federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant
1	DoD	49,552,470	NDRI
1	U.S. Army	29,096,000	Arroyo Center
1	U.S. Air Force	45,467,025	Project Air Force

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