

Testimony by Mark L. Schneider, Senior Vice President, International Crisis Group to the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives “Training and Equipping Afghan Security Forces: Unaccounted Weapons and Strategic Challenges.”

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I want to thank the Chairman Congressman John Tierney and the Members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to offer testimony today to the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs on the topic of “Training and Equipping Afghan Security Forces: Unaccounted Weapons and Strategic Challenges.” On behalf of the International Crisis Group, I also want to express our appreciation for the Subcommittee’s continued exploration of key issues that relate to success or failure in combating al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

If I might, Mr. Chairman, I would like to begin with the final phrase in the title of today’s hearing: strategic challenges. The international community faces strategic challenges in building competent and effective security forces and in stemming the increased ability of the Taliban and their al Qaeda allies to threaten the lives of the Afghan people and the security of Afghan state institutions—as we tragically saw yesterday--and thus once more pose a direct danger to the U.S. and the West generally.

Strategic incoherence and inadequate coordination here in Washington and in Kabul within the U.S. military, between the military and civilian government agencies and between the U.S. and its international partners in Kabul are fatal to success in confronting the Taliban insurgency. The results of that strategic chaos have played out across Afghanistan over the past seven years.

The UN Security Council reported in November 2008, 6,792 security incidents through the first ten months last year, compared to 508 in 2003. The UN also reported last September that some 12 districts were under the control of the Taliban, about 50 considered high risk where humanitarian access is intermittent and another 90 at extreme risk—meaning that neither the government, the UN and the international donor community nor NGOs—has access for humanitarian or development projects. In fact, in December, the UN Security Council after traveling to Afghanistan reported that “Almost 40 per cent of Afghanistan is either permanently or temporarily inaccessible to governmental and non-governmental aid.”

We also have heard nearly every military commander, from General McKiernan to General Mullen to Secretary Gates pessimistically point to the trend lines moving in the wrong direction unless there are fundamental changes in policy. According to

CENTCOM Commander General David Petraeus, Afghanistan "has deteriorated markedly in the past two years," a result of worsening security, escalating corruption and high levels of opium trafficking.

That is why we are hopeful about the White House announcement this week that Bruce Riedel will chair with co-chairs Amb. Richard Holbrooke at State and Under-Secretary Michele Flournoy at Defense a full strategy review for the President taking into account the three reports on Afghanistan/Pakistan being prepared by General Lute at the NSC, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and General Petraeus. The President needs a single set of recommendations that will constitute what General Fields' January 30, 2009 SIGAR report to the Congress describes as an "overarching, unified strategy" for Afghanistan. The strategy must be integrated and encompass security, governance and reconstruction in Afghanistan—with transparent benchmarks—and ultimately all parties, including the Afghan government must buy into it and be held accountable for its execution.

The International Crisis Group has been recognized as the pre-eminent non-partisan, non-governmental source of field-based analysis, policy advice and advocacy to governments, the United Nations, and other multilateral organizations on the prevention and resolution of deadly conflict. Crisis Group publishes annually around 90 reports and briefing papers, covering 60 countries as well as the monthly [CrisisWatch](#) bulletin. Our staff is located on the ground in twelve regional offices and seventeen other locations in or near crisis zones around the world, with four advocacy offices, in Brussels (the global headquarters), Washington, London and New York; and liaison presences in Moscow and Beijing. Our South Asia regional office is in Islamabad and we have had an office in Kabul since shortly after the Taliban was removed in 2001.

I have attached a one-page annex which describes briefly a series of Crisis Group reports over recent years on Afghanistan which we believe point to ways forward in many areas critical to reversing the current downward spiral of insecurity and violence.

Let me discuss our findings with respect to building a national police force able to uphold the rule of law. In our first report examining this issue in August 2007 we found almost total collapse of the national police, with a widespread culture of impunity, the police often a source of fear rather than security, and an absence of international agreement or coordination of multiple training programs. The GAO conducted an excellent study last year, which noted that despite the appropriations of \$6.2 billion none of the 433 police units were fully capable of stand-alone performance. Using that same test, the Pentagon reported at the end of 2008 that still only 18, most of them the Afghanistan National Civil Order (ANCOP) police units, were deemed fully capable.

This past December 2008, we published our follow-on report. While we note a welcome increase in financial resource commitments of \$3.8 b. for 2007 and 2008 (and another \$1 b. for FY2009) a significant portion of that money has yet to be disbursed. Again the naming in late 2008 of a new interior minister and a new attorney general are also steps forward along with the arrival of a new respected EU police commander and increased

UN focus on the issue. The European Union Policing Mission still holds nominal lead in the area although its efforts continue to be dwarfed by those of the U.S.

Between our reports, the major change was the launching of the U.S.-led Focused District Development program designed to identify, train, mentor and equip law enforcement personnel district-by-district law. It is an essential first step at grassroots level to establish what police are deployed and to ensure that they have some basic skills along with needed equipment. However, progress has been slow. Given the resources expended, there has been too little progress in terms of police accountability or effectiveness:

- the previous U.S. commander said that he lacks an estimated 2300 trainers and mentors; (Even if he received those trainers, the estimate was the re-training process would take at least five years. After one year it has reached 50 of 350 districts, but only 33 have completed the re-training.) The new Pentagon report a few weeks ago acknowledged that mentoring teams can only reach 25% of all ANP organizations and units. It is hard to understand why--with 675,000 police officers in the U.S. and an estimated 10% in the military reserve or national guard--we cannot find a way to get the necessary police trainers into the field—perhaps by shifting their reserve specialties from infantrymen or cooks to police trainers.
- the training periods are extremely short –for comparison purposes consider that we require 28 weeks to train a Haitian policeman and just eight in Afghanistan;
- despite its nominal lead, the EU also has failed to provide needed personnel or resources; and
- the failure to root out corrupt interference in police appointments and in operations undermines morale. (On any give day, about 20% of the supposed 80,000 police officers were absent from duty—another 17% are listed on the rolls but are actually the names of dead or wounded police, but remain there so their families will receive a paycheck.)

Perhaps as disturbing as the lack of financial and human resources has been the lack of an understanding of the basic function of civilian police; police officers are not warfighters. Their role is to uphold the law and fight crime and not to fight wars. Putting police in the front lines against the Taliban has resulted in three times more police than army troops killed last year, hurting morale and depressing recruitment.

The basic requirements for reversing these conditions begin with:

- ensuring that police reform occurs within larger state-building efforts;
- clearly defining and respecting the roles and responsibilities of the police, military and intelligence agencies; law enforcement needs to be at the very core of police training and reform;
- coordinating U.S. efforts and ensuring policy agreement from the International Policing Coordination Board, chaired by the Minister of Interior and with UNAMA, ISAF, NATO, the U.S. Embassy, CSTC-A, EUSR and EC representatives;

- parallel reform and links with prosecutors offices and the justice sector (I cannot emphasize how important it is to ensure at least some progress can be seen in the broader criminal justice system so that if the police force arrests drug traffickers, they are tried and, if found guilty, go to jail for a long, long time. This of course also goes to the much larger issue of the U.S. not having one single agency responsible for police and justice reform efforts internationally—either in post conflict situations or in fragile states to help prevent conflict);
- engaging civil society, particularly women’s organizations, and promoting some linkages to civilian accountability mechanisms; and
- focus on the community policing requirements to build trust and credibility, perhaps by linking the returned, trained police forces to the teams.

Building competent and effective police forces should be of equal concern to the goal of building an Afghan National Army, and in terms of the daily lives of Afghan families, is even more important. I would hope that the end of the current review of U.S. strategy for Afghanistan will raise the priority attached to establishing an effective Afghan National Police force within a functioning rule of law.