THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

TRANSITION IN ACTION:
BUILDING THE AFGHAN ARMY FROM "BOOTS ON THE GROUND" UP

Washington, D.C.
Monday, June 6, 2011

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. O'HANLON: Good afternoon, everyone. Thanks for coming. I'm Mike O'Hanlon from Brookings' Foreign Policy Program in the 21st Century Defense Initiative. Welcome to Brookings.

We're delighted today to have Lieutenant General William Caldwell speaking about Afghanistan and specifically his job there leading the NATO Training Mission, which is, to put it in the vernacular of American discourse, essentially our exit strategy and our ticket home ultimately, more than perhaps anything else that's been done in the mission.

For those of you not familiar with how military command arrangements work in Afghanistan, General Caldwell has one of the three big pieces of the overall effort under General Petraeus and has done so, now, in a remarkable display of commitment and perseverance since November of 2009 along with his staff there.

Prior to this assignment, General Caldwell ran the Combined Armed Center at Fort Leavenworth, which means he has a great body of background in educating American military officers and allied partners here as well and has had a number of previous deployments, including in Iraq where he was the MNFI spokesman; also in Haiti, in Panama, and in Operation Desert Storm. So, a remarkably distinguished career.

We're very, very fortunate that on a trip back to Washington he's able to take time with us. He's going to proceed by giving a presentation for about a half hour, and then we'll both join forces up here on stage. I'll ask him a couple more questions, and then we'll go to you.

We're fortunate also to have CPAN covering the event this afternoon and

a number of other media, which I think is very, very important for the American people to hear from one of their commanders how the effort is going to train and improve the Afghan army and police.

So, we'll look forward to having that conversation, and please remember in advance to identify yourselves and speak clearly if you ask questions, because we'll want everybody around the country to hear your question and the general's response.

Without further ado, please join me then in welcoming General Bill Caldwell to Brookings. (Applause)

LTG CALDWELL: First of all, thank you all for the opportunity to be here this afternoon. I greatly appreciate this. Obviously we just flew back in from Afghanistan, last being back in the United States November of last year. So, it's been a while since we've been back here.

I do want to say I appreciate the fact that so many personnel from foreign embassies are here today representing many different nations, which are a key, critical part of what we're doing over there in Afghanistan. I have developed an immense respect and admiration for the fact that a NATO command can do so much for a mission like this, having now served in this capacity for about 20 months.

What I'd like to do today is tell you a little about the Afghan National Security Force, if I may. We call that the ANSF. As I go through, I'll use that term, but it's the Afghan National Security Force, which consists of the Army, the police, and the Air Force.

As we go through this dialogue and share a couple of things, I'll be showing pictures on the screen. These are just pictures to give you a visual understanding of some of the context of the information I'll be talking about, and then

obviously at the end I'll be glad to take whatever questions anybody has and talk about that.

I can tell you this. There has been significant progress made in the development of the Afghan National Security Force over the past 20 months. I mean, a lot of people ask me that: How are they doing? I can tell you they have made significant progress, not only in terms of the growth, the number of them, but also in terms of their quality, too, which is just as important, if not more imperative.

I can tell you, though, as you hear very often, these gains are not yet irreversible, and there still are challenges. So, as I go through this presentation, I don't want to mislead anybody to think that there's not still more than ample challenges to be taken on and worked in the future. There are.

But it should not at all undercut the incredible progress that has been made as I have watched what we have been able to accomplish with our Afghan counterparts in the international community over the past 20 months. In fact, what we normally say is a transformation literally occurred in the Afghan National Security Force, in the ANSF.

What you do see, you see a tremendous growing pride in themselves and in who they are. There's a much greater sense of nationalism being exhibited, especially through the Army force than there was 20 months ago, and they are beginning to take the lead for security in very small select areas and in the lead for training in very small select areas. But it's the beginning of what's absolutely critical and imperative as we move forward.

Today they are entering into a critical period of development, and it's really a real time of uncertainty. We realize they're going to be tested very heavily by the

enemy, the insurgent forces that are operating there inside of Afghanistan. We also know they're going to be challenged internally by all propensities about how to act and what to do. And we also know that this is all going to be happening while they're striving very desperately to get on their own two feet and represent themselves as they are continuing to grow and develop.

What we do today to assist their force to achieve this lead for security will have truly lasting implications out into the future.

I was recently at the third graduation ceremony for the National Military Academy of Afghanistan, a place where we as a coalition, along with our Afghan partners, educate and train Afghan's next generation of leaders. These young newly graduated lieutenants of that institution are truly going to play an incredibly, remarkable, and very key element of the development of this security force as we go forward.

On that day in March, President Karzai addressed the graduates, and he spoke about security transition, the process of turning over responsibility for Afghanistan security from the international community to the Afghan government and its people. What struck me at that ceremony after having served there now since the fall of 2009 is just how much transition really means to the Afghan people. There is a real desire on their part to take responsibility for their own security. For Afghans, transition has really become a matter of national pride and personal honor. You'll find that in their culture, but it's becoming very apparent in the discussions that you have with them as we continue moving forward.

I can also tell you that the Afghan people want to take this responsibility for defending their families, their communities, and their nation. I see it in the young recruits at the training centers. I can sense an incredible difference from the fall of 2009

when we barely had 800 recruits coming into the army to today where we have over eight to 10,000 every single month signing up wanting to serve their country.

I visited with some of the wounded recently again in the various hospitals and clinics that we have around the country, and what strikes me about these young Afghan soldiers and policemen is their desire -- just like I see in my own Army -- to rejoin their comrades and to continue to serve their nation. It was not that readily apparent 20 months ago, and I see it routinely now as I go through the different wards and talk to these young men.

The NF is working towards the day that the defense of Afghanistan and the security of their population will be done by their men and women. Transition, I will tell you, is an aspiration of the Afghan people. And there are literally, like I said, thousands every month that are joining the police and armed forces of Afghanistan.

Our vision in keeping with the goals set by President Karzai during the Cobble conference last June and then again reaffirmed by the international community this past November in Lisbon is to set the conditions for transition of national security responsibility to the Afghan government by December of 2014.

Achieving security transition in Afghanistan is a major undertaking. It requires a cooperation and partnership with the international community and the Afghan government, from the Ministries of Defense and Interior, to the individual soldier and policeman and each and every unit that's in those organizations. But achieving transition would truly only be the beginning of our challenge. We have an equally responsible responsibility to ensure that when we do transition security responsibility to the Afghanistan forces, it endures and it will last. It has to last. It's not enough to just transition. It's just as important and the challenge that we will face is ensuring that what

we do does last.

During my time in Afghanistan, I've been constantly reminded of the previous effort by a major power to build an Afghan government and security force. Wherever you go in Afghanistan, there are echoes of their previous effort that succeeded in building a government and a very robust security force, but the effort failed to make it last.

All that reminds us about is that today as we move through and continue our mission that we have a responsibility to ensure that this transition endures again, and I just continue to say it because it is so critically important that we think about how we're going to make this last.

Today I'm going to share with you a little about what NATO Training Mission -- or as we call it, NTM-A -- is doing with the Afghan government to achieve this enduring security transition that places Afghans in the lead by December of 2014 and then ensures that it lasts. I hope to provide you an appreciation of the investment made in the Afghan National Security Force by the United States and the international community in setting the conditions for security transition so you can better understand our strategy to achieve this critical milestone as we move forward.

With an Afghan population of about 30 million people, it's clear that the ANSF must be of sufficient size and strength to achieve security across their entire nation. Add to this the extreme terrain in Afghanistan and one gets a better sense for the magnitude of the security challenge. Literally, anyone who stood at the foot of the Hindu Kush or has looked over the deserts of Kandahar will understand that to protect the people, to defeat the insurgency, and to provide security across the 400,000+ miles of land the size of the Afghan security force is important.

Over the past 20 months the NATO Training Mission - Afghanistan, and the security ministries have focused on building Afghan formations in significant numbers. We produce entire units along with individual soldiers and policemen that are prepared to deploy and fight and serve their nation. We literally, at this point, have developed ourselves into really producing almost an industrial kind of method of producing these forces in the police and the army that's necessary for Afghanistan.

Since November of 2009 when NTM-A was established, the ANSF has grown by nearly 100,000 soldiers and police. Today their strength is just over 296,000 strong. True Afghan surge, when you think about it, in less than 20 months over 100,000 new police and army formations and individuals were added into there.

Today the ANSF now is less than about 10,000 soldiers and policemen from reaching its October 2011 goal of 305,000 that was set by International Community at Lisbon Conference in 2009. This remarkable growth has been enabled by the significant investment of the United States and the international community and the training mission. Increasing congressional funding and a surge of American and NATO forces, to include trainers and advisors and the assignment of talented leaders to the mission, have directly enabled the expansion of the police and army training capacity and the quality of their force across Afghanistan.

However, increasing the size of the force does not come without its associated challenges. One such challenge is attrition or the unexpected loss of soldiers and police due to desertion and combat losses. Attrition in the army, if left unchecked, could undo much of the progress made to date. Through partnership at the ministerial level and unit levels, attrition rates have declined but are still a matter of concern and attention that we continue to need to remain focused on. Ultimately attrition in the ANSF

is an Afghan problem that requires an acceptable Afghan solution. We're not going to be able to impose upon them a Western solution to this Afghan problem, but we must help them find an effective solution that works within an Afghan context.

Another challenge associated with the growth of the force is what we now call "the insider threat." To safeguard against infiltration and co-option, NTM-A and the ministries have developed a very active and continuous multi-layered defense, which starts with an eight-step vetting process for all new recruits coming into the police and army, the addition of Afghan and coalition counter-intelligence personnel into the formations in an increased awareness through education and training as to what each and every individual within the police and the army should be aware of and pay attention to.

Additionally, we're working with the security ministries to complete a personal asset inventory to physically account for every single Afghan soldier and policeman and to ensure that each is enrolled in the biometric database that's shared now jointly between the Afghan government and the coalition forces.

Recent incidents of violence against Afghan and coalition forces do in fact erode the hard-earned trust that is required for an effective partnership, but we cannot allow these isolated incidents to detract from our overall efforts. Active vigilance, training, and planning on the part of the coalition and our ANSF partners are important measures to combat this threat, and we and our Afghan partners take this threat very seriously.

Today we're training the Afghan army, police, and air force at over 70 training sites located in 21 of the 34 provinces across Afghanistan. We do believe that high quality, realistic, and challenging training is key to the transformation of the ANSF

into a professional, highly skilled, trusted institution that meets their nation's needs. We have partnered with the security ministries to expand training capacity, and we have improved the quality of training their nation. We have, in fact, now standardized just baric efforts of different programs of instruction and created national standards not only for the army but just most recently for the police forces.

And we are now also seeing an enforcement of this at all the different training centers. There are other training centers in just what NATO Chinese mission Afghanistan now. And the key is between the German police project team, the European Union police, the NATO Training Mission - Afghanistan, and our Afghan partners, we collectively have now come together and built one standardized program of instruction, rigidly enforcing that and using that across the entire nation as we build and continue to develop their police force.

We've also just recently made the decision with our Afghan partners to expand the Afghan uniform police corps, that is, the basic patrolman course, the cop on the street, from 6 weeks to 8 weeks. Again, an international decision that was collectively made whether Afghan counterparts to expand this course from six weeks to eight weeks, which will take effect next month in our first three pilot programs. This addition will allow for increased training in key areas, such as human rights and gender issues, transparency and accountability -- an intelligent led policing.

Improving the quality of training is a continuous process. In addition to the resources the United States and the international community effort, thousands of military police, military personnel, and civil servants and civil police have now partnered with the ASNF. These trainers and advisors are having truly a transformative effect upon the Afghan security force members, who are now starting to begin to emulate the

dedication and duty and professional values and the actions of these trainers and advisors that are working side by side with them.

While it's important to train Afghan soldiers and police, it's also essential that we begin the process of training Afghan instructors to take over the responsibility to train their own force. Towards that end, we have partnered with the Afghan security force, and we are now building an Afghan instructor training program. It has begun to produce instructors who are now certified to become primary instructors and, more importantly, it's got a certification process that now allows them to also train Afghan instructors to train other Afghans to become instructors. It's a long process though. It will take about two years. We've begun. We've got a couple hundred in there now that are certified, and it will grow eventually to about 4,000 by December of 2012.

We're also helping to build permanent army and police training commands -- key, if we're going to, again, make this thing last. They now oversee the entire training system with a (inaudible). Both of these training commands are developing the knowledge, the expertise, and the assistance required to make the (inaudible) an Afghan-led responsibility that will endure.

In addition to training individual soldiers and policemen in collectively training units, we also are beginning to take on, and have been now for about a year and a half, training Afghan leaders. Leader development is and continues to be our number one priority. As we all know, good leadership provides the foundation upon which any organization develops and improves. In our leader development courses we train and educate officers and noncommissioned officers in professional values, and we inculcate in them a spirit of service, pride, and national patriotism. However, despite our efforts and increasing leader capacity, we still have today leader shortfalls. It's relatively easy to

train a new soldier or policeman, but it does take much longer time and effort to train, educate, and develop a leader. We are working to close these critical shortfalls and provide the trained small-unit leaders while still continuing to grow their force. We believe that trained and effective leaders at all levels are the key to solving some of the most difficult challenges that we find today in the ANSF. And that's a key point to understand. If in fact their force was at this level when we began and their leader numbers were down at this number and needed to come up, as these forces continue to grow we have rapidly started closing that leader shortfall. So, as we continue to grow this force, we are in fact starting to close the leader deficit that exists out there, both at mid-grade level leaders and at the most junior level leaders.

While we're building capable and professional military and police units, we're also simultaneously creating the mechanisms that ensure civilian control over these forces. The subordination of security forces to the government is a hallmark of a properly functioning democracy, and our ministerial development program plays a key role in this process. To achieve security transition, the ministries must be fully capable at managing the growth, training, sustainment, and employment of their force. Over the past two years, there's been significant progress in ministerial development. Both of the security ministries are growing more capable and effective every day. This is made possible by the fact that we have about 500 advisors that every morning wake up and go to work in these two ministries as a full-time duty. They work both within the Ministries of Interior and Defense to advise and mentor the ministerial officials to better manage and control their security force.

Our advisors that we have work in those two ministries consist of military personnel, law enforcement personnel, civil servants from multiple different nations that

have come together collectively to provide that kind of training and advice inside the ministries.

Just alone within the U.S. government, we've had 33 civilians -- Department of Defense civilians who have volunteered to come and serve under what's called the Ministry of Defense Advisory Program, MODA, inside of Afghanistan. We have 27 more volunteers who are in training today that will deploy at the end of this month and join us over in Afghanistan. Of the first group of 17 that arrived last summer, 9 of them have elected to stay for a second year and to continue doing what they're doing inside of those two ministries. Incredible display of willingness on the part of our civilian partners here back in the Department of Defense to be a part of this effort inside of Afghanistan.

Afghan leaders in the ministries are in fact increasingly taking the lead in executing key critical functions. We do in fact for the first time start seeing important policies and development of strategic guidance documents being done. And this is really important. Whereas 20 months ago there was no requirement when you graduated from any kind of military or police training to serve in their armed forces, today they passed a law that now has a requirement for service of up to three years or five years or ten years, depending on whether you're a patrolman, a noncommissioned officer, or an officer. Again, a key critical aspect for the development of a professional force, understanding that through their training programs they do in fact incur an obligation to serve back for their country for a period of time.

We do recognize, however, that all of this progress is threatened by corruption within the Afghan National Security Force. Corruption in the Force constitutes a very complex problem with no real easy solutions. It undermines the legitimacy of the government and nullifies efforts to build the trust and confidence between these security

forces and the people of Afghanistan.

Corruption also weakens the government, strengthens the insurgency, and wastes national resources, not to mention alienating their own people. At NATO Training Mission - Afghanistan, our anticorruption strategy is to create an open and transparent system within the two ministries all the way down to the small unit level and to help them establish policies and procedures that remove corruption and eliminate opportunities for corrupt behavior.

We're also helping the Afghans foster a professional culture within their organizations that is consistent with Afghan values and in which corruption, though, becomes an unacceptable way of behavior. Our combined efforts to reduce ANSF corruption will take time. Reforms are possible. And we will continue to work with the Afghan leaders to build a much more transparent and accountable system than we even have today.

While developing quantity and quality into the force is essential, it's equally important that the ANSF have the right equipment and infrastructure to perform their duties. We make great strides in providing them with what we call capable, affordable, and sustainable weapons, vehicles, equipment, and infrastructure.

The three interconnected criteria -- again, capable, affordable, and sustainable -- are very, very important. The way we define that, we say it's capable if it meets the requirement to defeat the threat and protect the people. We say it's affordable if it provides the best value over time. And we say it's sustainable if it is durable enough to withstand the harsh environment there and is able to be maintained by the Afghan security forces themselves.

The United States and our partners in the international community have

invested heavily in the equipment that meets these criteria. This equipment is providing them what they need in terms of mobility, protection, and fire power to both defeat the insurgency and protect their people. Additionally, we've also made significant investment in the infrastructure within Afghanistan, such as police stations, training stations, and depots as well as headquarters and barracks.

However, equipping the ANSF and building its facilities is only part of the solution. There is also an obligation to maintain them and sustain them so that, again, the echoes of the past do not haunt us in the future.

As you know, we very deliberately built an M3 censured force in the Afghan National Security Army up front. It was counterinsurgency capable, and it was rapidly employed into the fight. But it was very dependent upon coalition support for any kind of support that it needed from communications, logistics, medical, or anything else in a support kind of structure. Those elements were not built up front but, rather, were delayed intentionally towards the end.

Today there are certain specialty duties that are being performed truly exclusively by coalition forces because of this. For example, coalition provides most of the artillery support -- route clearance, combat and construction engineering, and other critical skills. However, over the past 12 months we have established the 12 vocational or specialty schools required to give the Afghans their own capacity to be trained and developed to in fact take on those duties. We're now beginning to train these skills and build those units as part of a phased development effort. We now have schools that train things such as logistics, finance, communications, human resources, intelligence, artillery, engineering, and other important functions.

As we continue the building of these support units and specialties for the

army and police, we will carefully and deliberately balance their force with increased capabilities so that they eventually will in fact have the ability to sustain themselves and operate independently from coalition forces.

Again, this is a very critical pillar in our strategy to achieve transition. We want to make it in fact last. Therefore, these units are the building blocks upon which it will be able to do that.

As far as professionalism, well, the size of the ANSF is critical; it is the quality of the force that truly is imperative. Injecting quality into the force at all levels is in fact a priority of ours at NATO Training Mission. In fact, it's truly the centerpiece of our efforts to build lasting quality into this force. Professionalism includes developing leaders, ensuring stewardship, building systems and institutions, and creating an organizational ethos. This leads in fact, anybody knows, to unit cohesion, reduced corruption, and much greater pride in who they are and what they are doing. Professionalism is a defining characteristic of any military or police organization.

We achieve quality in the force in part through training and leader development. Building leaders and great training programs require four critical components. That's the people, the resources, the strategy, and the time. The United States and the international investments in our effort there have in fact provided us with the resources, the people, and the strategy.

Time, however, is more elusive. If we want a fully trained and quality force that can last, we must have the patience to develop one. We did not build the United States Army, of which I am a part, overnight. Building quality into the ANSF requires strategic patience and an enduring commitment. Professionalism of their force also helps also helps to close the credibility gap between them and the people of

Afghanistan. A fact of geography is that in many areas of Afghanistan, including the hundreds of isolated communities and the valleys, the army and the police are probably the only visible and only connection between the people and their central government.

We recognize the Afghan Security Force as a foundation for building trust between the government and the people. It needs to be accountable, and it needs to have inculcated within it an ethos of selfless service.

Our efforts to train Afghan soldiers and policemen and to train Afghan trainers to train Afghans are now setting the foundations for transition. But there is a third aspect that must be also developed, and that's building permanent infrastructure systems and enduring institutions. The soldiers and police that make up the force for finite periods of time are (inaudible), but it's truly the systems and institutions that will last for generations. They are the key to making it last.

Clearly, systems like recruiting and personnel, training and education, and logistics and medical are required to ensure self-sustainment. But these types of systems are now just in their initial stage of development. Eventually they will grow into a national network capable of sustaining their force. I often hear critics say that the Afghan National Security Force logistics and medical systems are completely broken, and although I would not necessarily completely disagree, I would also respond by saying well, how can something be broken that has not yet been fully developed?

The truth is that building the systems for the ANSF is going to take time. But the process has started, and it's an important step along the road toward achieving transition by December of 2014.

Institutions are equally critical to the long-term development and professionalization of the force. Institutions such as National Military Academy of

Afghanistan, the Combined Sergeants Major Course, the Police Academy, and the Noncommissioned Officer Development Courses are all individual institutions that will soon become part of a broader institution called the Afghan National and Security University. This will be a consolidated system of training and professional education that will continue to help transform their force for generations. In fact, if we are as successful as we hope, it could soon become a true model of intergovernmental cooperation within their structure there.

I think everybody here appreciates part of the challenge that we have in Afghanistan is the fact that their human capital has been degraded by many years of civil war. Yet one thing that endures is the abundance of the people there, the potential of the people of Afghanistan. We believe that an investment in Afghanistan's human capital is truly key to that nation realizing its potential and the ANSF becoming an effective and truly professional force.

The human potential of Afghanistan is very much like the strategic minerals we hear that are hidden beneath in huge deposits underneath its soil that one day could in fact be mined to provide them tremendous monetary resources. Well, their people are no different. They are there, and they are accessible, and they are eager to be educated and to learn. Such is the great potential we say of the Afghan people, and we believe that investing in human capital is critical to help make this security transition last.

To develop this potential, we are in fact in the process now of building critical specialty and vocational skills within the army and police. A modern and self-sufficient security force requires specialists like engineers, medical professionals, communications experts, maintenance and repair technicians, and many other skills to

give it an enduring capacity that will last.

As part of developing the Afghan human capital, we are also helping them address their gender integration within their force. It is a complex problem with deeply rooted social and cultural nuances, and it ultimately will require an Afghan solution. But it is a fact that women are significantly underrepresented in their force, accounting for less 1 percent of all personnel in their police and army today. And we are working to help them leverage the potential of women by bringing them into the Afghan police and army forces. But it will take some time, but it's already started, and there has been significant progress being made moving forward.

Widespread literacy is another thing that we are confronted with. We know through testing that of every new recruit that comes into the army and police today, only one out of ten can read and write; only one out of ten can read and write. They don't even know how to count numbers, and they can't even write their name. It's very difficult for us to comprehend that. In fact, as I have shared with people in the past, when I first arrived in Afghanistan and the late Ambassador Holbrook approached me and talked to me about doing literacy training, I remember looking at him and saying Ambassador, you don't understand, I'm a military soldier, I don't do literacy, and him telling me well, if you don't, general, you're going to find your job very challenging just like everyone else has before you. And when -- about 90 days later is when we recognized that we're going to start doing literacy. And we've taken it on with a tremendous vengeance ever since. Today we employ just over 2,600 Afghan teachers. We even culcated literacy into every single training program that we do across Afghanistan.

To give you the magnitude of what we're doing there, each day we're training over 32,000 Afghans in our various training programs and every single one of

them is taking two hours of literacy every single day. It is absolutely imperative that we help raise their educational level within Afghanistan if we're going to make this effort of ours endure.

It's not enough to train them to be a good soldier or policeman. It's important to train them so that they can continue to develop and grow and sustain themselves.

Literacy is and we call it the essential enabler for professionalization of their force, and we've put a tremendous amount of time and effort into helping do this. To date now we have trained just over 90,000 young men on how to become literate. Doesn't mean that they've reached a high school grade level. All we're trying to do is give them the basic abilities to read and write so that they can function and properly account for things, be able to write a report, be able to read their pay statement; be able to ensure that they're carrying the right weapon with the serial number. I mean, these are basic, critical skills that is want this force to endure, to last for a long time, we have to give them those basic skills.

It's hard to describe, truly, just how meaningful it is to the Afghans what this literacy effort has done. But what you will see when you go out there is young men who finished the first program of instruction of 64 hours wearing that pin proudly in their shirt. It literally means more to them than any medal or commendation would to be able to put a pin in their shirt to signify that they can write. It's awesome what we found very, very empowering. For the first time the Afghan young men are being given a skill set that can never be taken away from them, and it's given them something that will last them through the remainder of their life. And when you go out and talk to them in these literacy courses, they will tell you that this is the most important thing that they now find almost

serving their police and their army is their government teaching them how to read and write. It truly is beginning to unlock the human potential of that nation.

And we're also doing it by other programs called the Afghan First, where we've gone out and tried to establish within Afghanistan the ability for Afghans to develop their own indigenous capacity to produce the equipment that's necessary for their police and army. So far, we have created just over 15,000 jobs doing this. Whereas in November of 2009 we literally imported every single piece of clothing and equipment we issued to their army and police, today we buy 100 percent of our boots in Afghanistan; 100 percent of our uniforms are made in Afghanistan; and we're now doing sheets, pillowcases, tee-shirts, socks, underwear. And it's just continuing as we evolve looking for and trying to partner with Afghans who want to stand up a company and produce the equipment necessary for their police and army of which we need to procure in order to provide for them.

There's a proverb that's heard in Afghanistan that states if you want to go fast, you go alone; if you want to go far, you go with others. The United States is not alone in this effort in building an enduring Afghan security apparatus. Here at this picture you see the American flag at Camp Edgars flies along that of 32 other nations, one-sixth of the world's countries all dedicated to seeing this mission and the Afghan people succeed in this endeavor.

Just a decade ago some of these nations were in fact themselves recipients of security assistance from the international community, and today they're in Afghanistan helping to build security there. It is within the realm of the possible that Afghanistan one day could in fact be, themselves, a recipient of security assistance and moving toward one of donations of providing for it in other places in the world. Until then,

an enduring commitment by the international community is critical to help us to continue to develop this force, critical to enable security transition, and critical to make it last.

Today, NATO does play a key role in this international effort to build security in Afghanistan. In fact, NATO probably is the only alliance in the world that has the leadership, the organization, and the capacity to accomplish this vital mission.

The fact is no single nation could do this mission alone. Our progress and that of our Afghan security partners has been enabled by multinational approach consisting of a partnership of nations committed to the training and the development of the ANSF. Though we in the international community have truly invested heavily in this mission, it will require strategic patience and a strong national will to bring this investment to maturity. Echoes from the past will continue to remind us that we must achieve a transition that lasts.

For many of you all, you know, you realize that on this day 67 years ago, we had a coalition that was formed together that achieved something truly extraordinary as the invasion occurred in Europe, a feat and courage and sacrifice that many of still honor and remember very well even till today. Well, today I'll tell you in Afghanistan a new coalition is in fact demonstrating similar courage and sacrifice, and its purpose is to help build an ANSF that is dedicated to protecting and serving the people of Afghanistan, an ANSF that is capable to take the lead for security so that Afghans can in fact secure Afghanistan, an ANSF that is self-sustaining with enduring systems and institutions that will last.

I appreciate you all giving me this time to share what we've been doing over there, and with Mike here I'll be glad to take whatever questions in the minutes that we have. (Applause)

MR. O'HANLON: General, that was fascinating. Thank you very much. I just want to hit a couple of questions, a couple of points, and then go to the crowd.

It sounds to me, if I understand correctly, that you'll reach your numerical goal sometime in 2012 whether that total goal stays around 350,000 or even goes up a little bit more, and then maybe there's another year of intensive partnering, and that to some extent seems to fit with the 2014 day. In other words, 2014 doesn't seem to have come out of the blue; it seems to fit very much with your schedule. Is that a reasonable way to think about how we've come up with that transition plan in the first place?

LTG CALDWELL: Mike, you're exactly right. We in fact, have built this plan so that it does set the conditions so that by the beginning of 2014 the forces have all been fielded, they're out there being partnered with, and they're continuing to be developed. And our focus then becomes truly on ensuring the systems are in fact now in place and are doing what they need to do to make this an enduring, lasting effort.

MR. O'HANLON: And on the -- you mentioned attrition in the force, and I know that you've been working very hard at reducing the Afghans who go AWOL, the Afghans who just decide they don't want to do typically a three-year tour. Can you explain to us a little bit about the trends you're seeing here, some of the steps you've taken that are effective, to what extent you have mitigated the problem, how you're feeling? You mentioned this could be really a fatal flaw in the force, that even if you get up to numerical targets, then people could desert in such numbers that you can't stay there. Have you made headway on this, and what are some of the other steps we have to consider to get to where we need to be?

LTG CALDWELL: Mike, a year ago when people asked me about attrition and I talked very openly about it, it was the biggest challenge we had. We, in

fact, were spending just as much time training new men to come in to be police and army to make up for the attrition as were trying to build new units. Since that time, however, through a very deliberate effort working with all the security forces inside of Afghanistan, both coalition and Afghan, the attrition rates in the police have been brought down to a very acceptable level. Today attrition is probably about 1.4 percent monthly. If you annualize it, it's about 18 percent, which means very normal within any country within the world to have that kind of routine kind of attrition. So, the police force is really within acceptable norms now. In fact, one of the greatest stories probably that you could talk about would be the Afghan National Civil Order Police. They're a (inaudible)-equivalent force. When we stood up this command, the attrition that month was just over 10 percent, which means -- if you annualize it, that means about 120 percent for the year. So, in other words, more people were leaving than we were able to bring into ANCOP force, and that persisted throughout last summer. And then last summer General Petraeus enabled us to put in place some different mechanisms, working with our Afghan partners that have brought that attrition down to where this past month it was down to 1.2 percent. Very, very acceptable. I mean, within a matter of a year by understanding what the challenge was, working very closely with Afghan partners, we were able to bring it to a very acceptable level. And our projections are that I think we've now reached -- it'll probably be a steady state will remain own there.

Within the army, we still are challenged by attrition. It's not exorbitant, but it's a high enough level that it's something we continue to watch very closely. We do see attrition predominantly in those cores that are engaged in active combat and so again we continue working closely with everyone there and trying to look at what other systems could we put in place to help address that like we did with ANCOP so that it does become

much more acceptable.

MR. O'HANLON: Now, another concern that I know has been on your mind and you mentioned it and it's been on all of our minds reading these terrible stories of various assassinations is the question of how do you vet the Afghan forces so that you, to the extent possible, prevent Taliban from sneaking in and also so that you maximize the capability of the elite bodyguard forces that are protecting some of these key people. As you go through the recent list of terrible incidents, though, it strikes me there's no particular pattern and therefore your job's got to be pretty hard to the extent you can do anything about it when you're first recruiting people. I mean, if you go back to April when we had the 20-year veteran in the Afghan air force kill nine Americans in apparently just a fit of anger, not anything ideological. Apparently in Helmand Province in May we had (inaudible) kill two Americans in the training program, if I got the information correctly when I was over there. We've had other random cases like that. Sometimes people just steal uniforms. So, it's not something you can prevent with any kind of vetting. Is this just a problem we have to live with at this pace where we seem to have a key Afghan official assassinated every week or two or three? Is it one we can even afford to live with, given that there aren't that many people of the caliber of some of the individuals who have been killed, like Daoud Daoud just a few days ago? Or is there something you can see? Are you beginning to see ways we can make better progress against this insider threat?

LTG CALDWELL: Well, I can tell you it's something we continue to look at and evaluate. And we have. We've looked at every single case, all 25 of them over the last couple of years, broken them into every kind of category you can imagine. There are predominately four categories. It's not necessarily the infiltration but more the co-

option and the impersonations that are the two that concern us the most as we see, as we go back and study each of these incidents.

We also recognize that this is a country -- you know, one ambassador was telling me very recently, from Afghanistan, he said you know, we're a country that's been traumatized by 30 years of war, and there are many young men who, you know, have been through some terrible experiences and sometimes the way they will settle disputes among themselves might turn much more violent than perhaps you might see in some other country that has not been at civil war for 30 years. And so it does concern us. We very actively look at each and every individual case, try to assess why it occurred, what could have been done to precluded it, were there any signs that could have given us an indicated that this might have happened, and then take the appropriate steps to then work that back into our training programs, our systems, our evaluations as we go forward. So, it is something that concerns us. We are worried about it. But at the same time, we also recognize that, you know, the Taliban in some cases where it has occurred with (inaudible) technique, they recognize this is a much softer target for them to go after rather than trying to engage directly with the Afghan security forces. So, everybody will continue to stay and remain very vigilant as we move forward.

The bringing in of counterintelligence personnel into the army and police forces, the teaming up now that they're doing with the National Director of Security, the NDS, to be a part of this process is already starting to have some very positive effects, and the identification and recognition of some things. So, they are making some very deliberate steps moving forward I think that will continue to be positive, but it doesn't mean it's going to negate or be able to stop this completely from occurring.

MR. O'HANLON: Just two more questions, one of them a follow-up on

that. Do you see of the 25 cases that you mentioned, have they been occurring at a faster pace, or does it just seem that way back here because of the victims being such high profile victims and such important reformist members of the Afghan government in the last few weeks?

LTG CALDWELL: There has been an increase over the last year. No question. It was not as prevalent at all back in 2005 through 2007, although a couple of selected cases. 2008 had picked up but '9 and '10 have been the -- you do see uptick of that has been used more often or has occurred more frequently.

MR. O'HANLON: My last question -- and it really is sort of in a way the one that I'm sure others will follow up with to some extent or another -- is about the fundamental quality of the Afghan forces. Now, I know you share the responsibility for their field performance with John Rodriguez and one of the other three-star commands in Afghanistan, because he's partnering with his NATO units and those Afghan forces in the field. But nonetheless, from your role in this process, I mean how would you answer the basic question, do the Afghan army and police fight? Can you either give us some statistics, some anecdotes, gut sense of how that's going? You're aware, as we are all are, that former marine, Bing West, has written an important book this year, and I'm sure a lot of his individual anecdotes are informative but he really is convinced the Afghans don't fight and I want to make sure we hear loud and clear from you your impression on that question.

LTG CALDWELL: Well, if we just -- if you just want to look at casualty figures, you know, I think that in itself proves that the Afghan Security Force, the police, and the army are in fact identified and are in fact taking very substantial losses in terms of both killed and wounded.

And those two security forces. So, they're very much engaged and they're part of the effort that John Rodriguez and I sit down every single week and talk for about an hour about the development of the security force and how it's performing in the field.

So, I can also gain a better appreciation for what adjustments we need to make. And then once a month we do a very, very deliberate process. We bring the two staffs together and walk through it also. And what we have done is that these forces today are far more superior and better than we produced three to four years ago. I mean, we know for a fact that if you want to make a policeman or a soldier competent in what they're doing, you've got to instill in them the skills to where they feel they are in fact very capable and competent in what they're doing.

For a variety of reasons, before November of 2009 it was not a requirement to qualify on your weapon to graduate from army training, for a multitude of reasons, but today that's in fact a requirement. Same with police training. We now actually ensure they can shoot accurately with their individual weapon when they go through the training programs. The training programs have been expanded to where we've also now brought in far more greater professionals to work with the military and police professionals. You know, police professionals like Conrad down here who's my senior police advisor from the Canadian Royal Mounted Police, who's worked with me over the last year in Afghanistan. I mean, those kind of folks interacting with the police and army that are coming out of the training base today truly have helped instill in them a much greater sense of confidence in what they are able to do and what they can accomplish. And we see that in the performance out in the field. I mean, John Rodriguez would be the first to tell you that. The units coming out today are far more better

prepared, equipped, and able to immediately engage in combat and do it in a very tactical manner that's done very effectively and perhaps what he saw himself when he got there, you know, in 2009.

So, there is an improvement occurring. They are getting better. And we are encouraged, because he's also doing a lot more partnering. Again, every time you can take some kind of international partner and put them with our Afghan counterparts to where we can help continue to develop and professionalism them, that's always better, too.

MR. O'HANLON: Excellent. Well, thank you.

Let's go to the crowd.

Please, again, stand, identify yourself, and ask a short, clear question if I could ask you to do that.

Start here with David. The microphone's coming.

MR. WOOD: I'm David Wood from the *Huffington Post*. General, thanks for coming here today. I appreciate it.

First, just a quick data point. What s the attrition rate for the NA? And, secondly, as you know what's gripping Washington this week is the Obama administration's deliberations about how fast and how many troops to pull out of Afghanistan. What is the relationship between what you're doing and his ability to pull extra troops out and can you tell us anything about the combat readiness of the units you're graduating to take the lead in security operations?

LTG CALDWELL: Okay, a couple questions there. All right, what I can tell you first of all is the combat readiness today is the best that it's ever been. After we go through training, what we do is we in fact bring in the IJC, the operational force -- they

bring in a special team and they actually do a test and assessment of every unit before we actually turn it over to them, and so that it's a joint assessment of those units, and their grades and the ratings that they're getting are the highest that I've seen in the past two years I've been in Afghanistan. So, clearly the programs and the systems that the NATO Training Mission has put into place and this support that we've had with advisors and the equipment and everything else is really having a real difference.

As far as the attrition rate in the Afghan National Army goes, it's right out at about -- again, there's monthly and annualized. If you do annualized, you're probably at about a 2.3 percent right now. This past month, the month of April -- the May data is just coming in, but the April data was 1.8 percent. But, again, that's the reason why I think it's important to talk about an annualized basis over 12 months is about 2.3 percent. So, it has come down slightly. I think Minister Warrick himself would tell you he wants to bring it down a little more himself, which is good. But this is much more sustainable today than it was last summer when it was up at about 2.8 percent annualized.

So, there has been downward trend. Is it enough? Not quite yet. But it's moving in the right direction. The trends are positive in where they're moving this right now.

MR. O'HANLON: Just to clarify before you get to the other question, the big question, the big question of our troops, too. 2.3 percent a month means about 30 percent a year, right?

LTG CALDWELL: That's correct.

MR. O'HANLON: And therefore that means that about a third of the force is leaving even when they're not supposed to, because presumably about a third of the force is reaching the end of their tour. You're saying in addition to that fact, one-third

is leaving when they're not even yet supposed to.

LTG CALDWELL: Right. And what's happened is the president of Afghanistan made a decision that even if you go AWOL and decide you want to come back, there's no penalty and you can come back and rejoin the force. Every single month about a thousand young men come back and rejoin the force that had been AWOL. We don't subtract that off the attrition numbers, so that we understand exactly what the real attrition is, even though we do -- if we wanted to add that thousand back in, it would reduce it by about .4 of a percent at least, if not more. So, there are a lot that come back. And again that's why we continue to study very closely what the attrition rates are and why did they occur -- because of the number that keep coming back and then continue to serve. We continue to track when they do come back and do they leave again in two more months or three more months? And what we find is most of them when they come back actually then stay and continue serving for a fairly long period of time in the time period we've been tracking this. So, we see a positive thing there.

MR. O'HANLON: Do you want to touch the question of how many forces President Obama might bring home?

LTG CALDWELL: You know, obviously, what our mission is is to enable the Afghan Security Force to take the lead for security, and so we will in fact field the last combat formation this August, an infantry battalion, 800 men or so. They call them Candacs. So, that will be fielded this August.

At the same time, we'll continue fielding the support forces. Again, those have not yet been built. But this is key. I mean, it's like Chairman Levin told me before I deployed over to Afghanistan -- he goes you're the ticket to transition, the mission that you're going to take on when you get there. And it really does become that, because the

reason the coalition forces have been there is to set the conditions so that it does enable the Afghans to be able to take the lead for security in their country, to handle the insurgency, and to reduce the possibilities of this becoming a safe haven for, you know, some sort of threat force developing again inside of Afghanistan, and that is occurring. And the key, like Mike said a second ago, is it will really be around the end of 2012 when we will have really got the force fairly well fielded out into the structure. We haven't yet finished building it. We're only at 296,000 of the 305,000 that's been internationally recognized today. So, we're still building this force today. And we also recognize that there has been a request to grow with the 352,000, which means we've got about another 45-50,000 more to go beyond that, which we would do over the next year, meaning that around October of 2012 we would have that force fully recruited, would not finish training it and fielding it to the end of 2012 into early 2013.

LTG CALDWELL: Okay, and I'll work back.

MR. MITCHELL: I'm Gary Mitchell, and I write the *Mitchell Report*, and I want to follow up on a question that Mike posed about Bing West's book, and others -- retired Colonel Andy Bacevich has written much along the same line, and we see and/or hear reports fairly consistently about the problems with the Afghans themselves, the willingness to fight corruption, etc. And then we hear from you recently, General Keene and Ambassador Jim Dobbins gave reports that are much more in line with your reports. So, if you're not involved but you're here in Falk Auditorium today reading the newspapers and you're watching the evening news, you bounce back and forth between seemingly reliable reports from reliable people that see things quite differently. And I'm wondering if you could help us a little bit with that and maybe drill down a little bit and -- for example, tell us some of the things that have gotten the desertion rate from

10 percent a month to 1.2 percent a month. Is it the literacy efforts? Is it to pay? In other words, if what you say is true, and I have no reason to doubt that, and if people like Bing West and others see it differently, there's got to be some explanation other than people who were looking at the same set of facts and drawing different conclusions. So, if you could sort of fill in some of the details, that might be helpful.

LTG CALDWELL: Yes. You know, the one thing I find is that things evolve very rapidly in Afghanistan. For a person who was there perhaps even nine, ten months ago, it is far different today on the ground than it was even ten months ago. Had I not been there in the fall of 2009 and seen what I saw, I mean, I -- we had police.

I mean, it just -- to give you the context, when people thought how bad the police were, I always say well, when were you last there. Because if they were there 2010, I completely concur with everything they're saying.

What I found in the police when I arrived in 2009, it was poorly paid it was poorly led; it was poorly trained; it was poorly equipped. And then people said you know, there's a real problem with the police. And I said well, yeah. I mean, if you don't train them, if you don't pay them, if you don't equip them, if you don't provide them leadership, you're going to have problems with the police.

And so, I mean, we had not, as an international community, done what was necessary to set the conditions to enable that police force to move forward. They were pockets around the country of some just incredibly great training going on. But there is no holistic overall plan, and there was nobody in the Ministry of Interior who felt like they had the overall authority or control of this. I mean, again, I didn't have a single police advisor. When I arrived in 2009 and I said okay, where's my civilian police that work on my staff? Everybody said well, what do you mean? We've got military police. I

said yeah, but I would like to have some kind of civil -- who's my civilian who's a policeman? Sir, you don't have any. I said there's none in this organization? And they said no, sir. I said well, yeah, there's got to be someone somewhere in this organization. No, sir, we don't have any. I mean, that's what we -- that's how we started. You know, today I've got on my staff 50 civil policemen that work all across integrated into everything I'm doing on police effort. I mean, they are the best there is. They're guys like Conrad, who come out of, you know, either Canada or the United Kingdom or Australia. I mean, they come around from around the world -- Romania. I mean, you name it. They're coming out of France, you know. Even Germany sent an LNO to work with us from their German police project team, because we recognized just how critically important it is that within our organization we have that kind of expertise in doing policing. And so there is a real difference being made today in the police effort. But it's being enabled because we finally are paying them the right wages. They were paid one-half the wage of an army private when I arrived. And we went back to the international community and requested that we raise their pay up and made it equal with an army private so that at least it was a minimum level wage. We then said well, where are we getting this equipment? They did not have one single armored vehicle in November of 2009, and yet all recognized and said they're dying at twice the rate of the army. My answer was well, yeah, we're not equipping them, we're not training them, we're not -- I mean, we're just not doing what's necessary to make that police force effective and to gain the trust and confidence of the people of Afghanistan and believing in it.

Today they have well over a thousand armored Humvees. They're going to 5,000, you know, over this next year. I mean, we're giving them the mobility, the protection that's absolutely essential for them to operate the way they're operating today.

So, we had to fix the pay.

And then the training. The methodology they used, which had been done in Afghanistan for many years, was you went out and recruited somebody to be in the police force, and then you assigned them with the intent to train them at some later date. Our assessment when we did this first inventory of police last year, January through May of last year, we found that over 50 to 60 percent of the police had never been formally trained. I mean, so a major undertaking we had there to start formally training them how to be a policeman. So, we've now changed that, working with the Minister of Interior. We now have what we call you recruit them, you train them, and now you assign them. And it's now codified in policy and is being in fact adhered to and being -- we had to triple the amount of training capacity for police, because there wasn't enough training capacity to do what was necessary. Again, you didn't need to, because you never trained them to begin with. But now that we're going to train them, you've actually got to increase your training capacity and bring more trainers in. So, when people say those things, I always do ask what force were you with and when was it trained and equipped, because that does make a difference. And that's why over time we're going to have to go back and systematically, once we finish growing this force, go back into those forces that were fielded very early on and take what we call mobile training teams to go down and work with them to do some of this retraining down in some of those units.

But these new elements coming out, the new police -- and Conrad can share with you -- that are coming out today are very professional. Not every single one is ever going to be perfect, but they're far more superior than anything that I saw in the fall of 2009.

And the army's the same way. We were fielding army units even as late

as March 2010 with only about 50 percent of their required equipment, because we just had not programmed and ordered it far enough in advance that it was there to be issued to them when they came out of the training base. Today when Army units come out of the training base, they're equipped at 80, 90 percent with all their equipment that's required and are properly trained on it, too. So, again, it's -- again I haven't sat and talked to Bing about which particular units he was with. But I would go back and do some forensics on that and I think we'd probably find that.

But there are a couple of factors. If you fix the pay, if you fix the partnering, if you give them some predictability in their life, predictability in the sense that they know they're not going to always be committed into combat but are going to have the time period off to take some vacation time, to go home to see their families, to take them their pay, and those kinds of things, and if you fix the leadership, those are huge.

And ANCOP, the Afghan National Civil Order Police, (inaudible) armed force, is probably the greatest example. We changed out the senior -- the Afghans changed out the senior leadership. Collectively we all talked about it and they made the decision and changed out. And they've got a great commander in there now, who's giving the right kind of leadership that's necessary.

We had to fix their pay because it was broken. We in fact now do ensure they have a very predictable cycle system where they are employed for three months and have six weeks off, six weeks of collective training, and then they go back in for three more months of combat. And that's having a real positive impact. So, once we implemented a system, and in fact now has proven very effective. So, that's what I -- when somebody says something to me like that I always ask them well, when were you last there, what unit did you see. And the week will probably quickly use some forensics

and I almost can bet most of the time it's going to be a unit that was filled before the end of 2009.

MR. O'HANLON: Just a quick acknowledgment to my good friend Ron Newman, who began to sound this issue when he was ambassador. He's in the crowd with us today. From 2005 to 2007, you've been the beneficiary of some of that attention, and you've taken it obviously to the next level, and it's a huge, huge story of progress. For those of you who want to read more, I recommend Ron's book and a few others.

Right here in the second row, please.

SPEAKER: Hi, my name is (inaudible), and I'm from Defense of Human Rights.

My question was in regards to -- you mentioned out of the 296,000 less than 1 percent are women. Women's empowerment has been a huge issue for Afghanistan foreign policy, and as you guys are going to training another 50,000 to reach up to the 350, could that be, like, an initiative that you could get more women involved in the military? Because once the women are empowered to -- I mean, I'm sure you'll have less attrition rate, and they can be much more, better defenders personally. So, thanks.

LTG CALDWELL: You know, it's interesting. When I arrived in the fall of '09, I was not committed to taking on worrying about gender integration. I just wanted to produce some numbers initially. I mean, that's all I was worried about. We just had to get this thing growing. And over the last year we have really evolved. I've brought in some personnel from the U.S. Institute for Peace that have helped us, too, and we've stood up a team then that does nothing but gender integration for us within our organization -- men and women -- and it's civilian and military that are helping us with policies and things that work within the Afghan side.

Some of the positive steps we were making that you'll start seeing are right now, you know, we're building this Afghan National Security University where the military academy will go to, and Minister Wardak, the Minister of Defense of Afghanistan, has agreed to us that in this next class that comes into the military academy a minimum of 10 percent must be women. So, that means out of the class of 600 that matriculate in, at least 60 have to be women. And we built a special dormitory. We're out recruiting the coalition officers and non-commissioned officers -- females -- that will come live in that dormitory during the time that these females are going to school so they have the right kind of mentorship and guidance, too. We also ran our first officer candidate school for women last year for the army. We had 23 graduates out of that. Out of those 23 graduates, 4 went to the Afghan air force. We've had them in a specialized English-language training program, and 3 of them next month will leave and travel to the United States and become pilots in the Afghan air force. Of the 42 that are in the program, obviously 4 are women, and those 4 women are in the top 7 of grades for the 42 that are in there. I mean, they're doing exceptionally well. I mean, they're extremely motivated and want to be a part of and serve their country.

We have our second officer candidate school class that just graduated. It had 32. And we've got our third class that will start on July 2nd. And right now we have 47. So, we're slowly increasing each size as we're able to recruit women who are willing to come in and serve.

The other thing we did within the police force -- Mr. Mohamidi, the Minister of Interior, has agreed that he's going to add 1,000 additional women into the police force each year. They have just over a thousand in the police force now. But over the next five years, in his five-year policy document he signed in February, the goal is to

add a thousand more every year. So, they're moving forward on the police side. On the army side, we're still a little more challenged. I don't something quite as aggressive as that that's been endorsed by the Minister of Defense yet. But in fact I'm very encouraged by the fact that he set that minimum standard for the military academy. He's been endorsing these officer classes for women that have been ongoing. So, there are some positive steps being made, and the key is now for us to sustain that and continue to grow it.

MR. O'HANLON: I think we'll start taking two at a time, and the guy with the microphone has been looking to ask, so I'm going to let him do so. And then Jim, five rows back right after Jordan.

Jordan, please.

Take two at a time.

MR. SCHNEIDER: Hi, my name is Jordan Schneider. I'm an intern here at Brookings, and I was wondering if you could address the Afghan makeup of the army and how you guys are trying to inculcate these feelings of nationalism and national pride, which will serve the Afghan army in the future.

MR. O'HANLON: And then Jim is about five rows back-- James Kitfield.

MR. KITFIELD: Hi, James Kitfield from National -- I won't stand up, because I have a computer in my lap.

General, when you have your discussions with General Rodriguez, could you tell us, do you ever talk about, you know, when you'll know that this force you're putting together is actually -- can stand and fight on its own. You know, you've had the experience in Iraq where, you know, it took baby steps and a few steps backward, but there came a point where commanders like yourself looked at them and said, you know,

these guys really can take the lead in the fight. When will you know that? What from a military man's perspective will convince you that we're on, as you say, a sustainable path here for a force that can protect its own country?

LTG CALDWELL: Okay, I'll take the ethnicity question first.

We all are very close with Afghan counterparts (inaudible) every month. And that's very, very important. We do it both in the office ranks, the noncommissioned ranks, and in the patrolmen soldier ranks. We've got an agreed-upon standard of what the country is broken in by ethnicity, and then of course we measure it, and we have about a +5 percent -- is what we've all agreed to that you can be above or below, because it's never perfect how you recruit every month. And then we make sure that once we form a unit that the formation of the unit out of the training base has an ethnic breakup that's about representative of the nation also. So, we spend an inordinate amount of time working very diligently at doing that.

I can tell you right now that we are slightly over in the army and the officer corps on Tajiks. It's more than 5 percent right now. It's at about 11 and 12 percent. So, it's more than what we want to see right now. And so over time we'll continue to help -- we won't take anybody out, but we'll just make sure that we don't bring as many in, in the future, when we do the other ethnicities.

But generally it stays fairly well balanced. Again, key to being representative of their country so that I can be a national force that represents all of Afghanistan and not one particular ethnicity or geographic area. And we do the same in the police force too. The only exception we make right now is with women. We made a conscious decision not to worry about the ethnicity of women, because we just have -- we're having a hard time getting them to come into the force. So, till we are able to get

larger numbers, we're not going to -- we do track it. I can tell you exactly what it is by 70 percent Hazara right now on the women. But again right now we're more interested in getting them into the force that we are worrying about the rest of the ethnicity. So, we don't want to preclude anybody from coming in. As far as when are they going to be ready, General Rodriguez, about two months ago, through his process that they use in all this fielding commanders, did in fact identify for the first time one of the 84 infantry battalions, Candacs, and the country is being able now to operate independently without absolutely no coalition partners or advisors whatsoever working with that unit. And he's got a fairly large group, right? But he's got about five different levels that they use to evaluate these, and there's a large group coming in behind it. So, each month you can see the progressive improvement in the infantry battalions out there as they move along. He does the same, too, with the headquarters and the other organizations. But we specifically have looked real hard at the entry ones of each one that would be a real key indicator to us.

But they in fact are moving forward, I mean, when somebody asks me are they going to be ready by December of 2014, you know, if the Afghans maintain the commitment they have today, the international support is still there, you know, my question is absolutely, they'll be ready to take the lead for security by December 2014. I don't even question it, looking at all the data, which is reams and reams of data we look at every single month trying to figure out indicators of different progress being made or challenges we have.

MR. O'HANLON: We'll take two more. Ma'am, right next to James, and then over here in the fourth row.

MS. TARABAY: Hi, Jamie Tarabay from -- I was at NPR when I knew

you in Baghdad. Now I'm at *National Journal*.

When you began your comments, you said the Afghan forces were going to be challenged internally by old propensities of how to act and what to do and I'd really love it if you could talk a bit more about that. And I have to ask: three months into your time there before acting on the literacy issue, we're now going on to 10 years in Afghanistan. Why is it taking so long? Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: And then we'll go here to the fourth row.

MR. ACKERMAN: Thanks. I'm Spencer Ackerman with Wyatt.com, so I've got a laptop on my lap as well, so I apologize for not standing.

General, can you talk about how enduring "enduring" will be. When you talk about what's necessary for maintaining these institutions so the Afghans can secure their country, what are you really looking at after 2014 in terms of foreign commitments from missions for money, for responsibility? What should the public be prepared about for that level of commitment? Thank you.

LTG CALDWELL: If I start right there, I'll tell you as far as the training mission goes, we won't complete doing what we need to do till about 2016, 2017. So, I mean, our mission clearly endures. As a NATO officer, my boss, the Secretary General, has been real clear that NATO Training Mission goes well beyond 2014. He's publicly stated that. And he's absolutely right. It will. Again, we only make up about 3 percent of all the military forces in theater, so we're not an overwhelming size but with a tremendous impact, and so I think it is something that we do want to see continued. I think the strategic partnerships that are worked out between different nations, between NATO and Afghanistan will be important, again, for my mission as a NATO officer, because it is something that will need to be sustained for some period of time. When they take the

lead for security, that means they're able to conduct, you know, independent operations, but it doesn't mean yet they have fully developed all their systems and institutions. That's why I like, when we're building the National Security University, we've actually built places for international professors to come, military and civilian, to be able to live there on the campus with offices and billeting spaces for them, because we recognize that kind of long-term, enduring partnership would be very, very good for our Afghan counterparts to have that continuing interface and dialog.

So, from the training perspective, we don't finish building the Afghan Air Force until 2016. So, again, some of these things take time and patience to do from a training perspective from building an institution. But I sincerely believe the ability for this thing to last; again, we have spent a tremendous amount of time building indigenous capacity. One of the things that we've gone back and looked at in previous efforts to build a military inside of Afghanistan is a lot of the training was done outside of the country, and so we are building all the capacity to do it inside of Afghanistan itself, training Afghans to become the trainers themselves, and then training Afghans to become the trainers of other trainers and then to run the systems. I mean, we've just now this year taken on building facility engineers, developing facility engineers, personnel who can maintain and sustain a military or police infrastructure that's been built inside of Afghanistan. Before this year, we never even attempted to take that mission on. But we recognize for it to endure, to last, they're going to need engineers. Well, I can tell you, for me to help develop an engineer in Afghanistan takes almost a year, because I literally have to put them through about three months of education before I can even start to begin teaching their basic technical skills. I've got to bring them up to a level of literacy that enables them to read and write, do basic mathematics, calculations, and those kinds

of skill sets. And when 9 out of 10 are totally illiterate and innumerate when they come in, you know, not that you can't do it, it just -- it's a commitment you've got to make, which goes to the question well, why weren't we doing it before 2010 when we started it?

I guess my best answer is because there were a lot of guys like me that were there before then that didn't have somebody like Ambassador Holbrook putting their finger on their chest saying hey, you really need to take on literacy and me saying that's not my job, that's Department of State, USAID, somebody else, but I don't do literacy. I train them to be soldiers and, the best I can, policemen. But we've all come to recognize just absolutely how critical it is. It is truly the essential enabler for us to do what we're doing inside of Afghanistan. I mean, I can't think of -- and it only costs $30 for each soldier we train to be literate, to give them those basic literacy schools. $30 is all it costs. So -- and we use all Afghan teachers. So, it's an indigenous capacity.

We just got NATO to stand up a NATO trust fund for literacy here in the last few months where nations can donate money, and the United Arab Emirates just recently put $10 million into the fund. And so those are the kinds of contributions we're looking for, too, again to make this thing last, because there is a lost generation of Afghans who have not had the opportunity or were denied that opportunity to be educated that need to be educated. And, you know, I would dare say we're probably becoming one of the largest employers of teachers other than the Ministry of Education is in that country, because we just recognize how critically important it is.

We're now setting up literacy courses out in the fielded units. You know, initially we only worried about it on the training base; we're now starting to push teachers out and hiring them to be out in the fielded units, because we think it's that important, too.

And as far as the propensities to going back to things that perhaps they

previously -- you know, a major one is teaching -- empowering down to your subordinates to be able to do things. Everything was very much centralized from years of the way they had been brought up previously by other training regiments before NATO got there, and teaching them to let go and allow their subordinates to make decisions so that not everything is centralized at the very top has been a very challenging task. We're making some real headway now. It's starting to occur. But we were always cautious that we don't want to go back to it. I would say some of the most capable officers today serve in the Afghan army, the young lieutenants and captains that have gone through these training programs in the last few years. They take initiative. They're willing to explore and do different things. They actually show a tremendous amount of care for their men. You know, our saying -- we used to say about the police when we arrived that the police believed they were there to be served by the people, you know, and I really think today we're starting to see a change in that where they actually recognize that their job is there to protect and serve the people. So, again, just making sure we don't slip into any previous perhaps ways they were operating 6, 7, 8, 10 years ago.

MR. O'HANLON: Time for one last question from the back, and I'm going to ask the gentleman here on -- yeah, that's right, in the red tie. Thank you.

MR. HOFFMAN: Hi, Michael Hoffman with *"Defense News*. I wanted to ask about the sustainment portion in standing up the support battalions. You were talking about the industry Candacs. There's a big problem that Iraq faced -- was for the Iraqi army standing up that support portion of it. Where are you guys now in handing that over by 2014?

LTG CALDWELL: Yeah, you know, again, I just had a team over in Iraq again about a month ago just gleaning more lessons learned on where they are right now

and trying to correlate that the 2014 -- the work away back to today to figure out what we need to be doing now. And that is a huge piece. The support units that we're now bringing on line are critical, because it will take us about a year and a half to get them fully fielded. And then they need to be parted with to be further developed. But the good thing is we're starting far enough in advance. The other good thing is we've been resourced to do what we need to do now. You know, when we came in and stood up this mission, they had not really been well resourced in terms of the people that were required. In fact, the commander before me used to say we live in a culture of poverty in that organization because they had to do without, whereas, you know, we've been very fortunate that, well, we've been able to get the trainers we need from both the United States and the international community to do the job. We're always ready to take more; we can fully employ them. But we're being given what we need to accomplish this mission, so even this fall what I think you're going to see is a decision here very shortly by our Secretary of Defense to give us another major support element that will work for us that we'll be able to take an employee to work with the support forces of Afghanistan coming in as an integral unit, which will be a huge uplift for us in getting at that task. So, again, we've been real fortunate. The Secretary of Defense has given just the people type of resources that are really important for us to do this mission.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you for your service, and thanks for your time today, general. (Applause)

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CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

/s/Carleton J. Anderson, III

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