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A DISCUSSION ON AFGHANISTAN WITH GENERAL JOHN ALLEN

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. O'HANLON: Well, good morning, everyone, and welcome to Brookings. I'm Mike O'Hanlon on the Center on 21st Century Security Intelligence at Brookings. And as all you know, we're honored today to have General John Allen with us, the former Commander of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan until just last month, when he completed 19 months in command.

In just a moment I'm going to ask you to join me in welcoming General Allen home and thanking him for his service. But first, let me very briefly summarize a couple of the highlights from his career that I know many of you are familiar with.

When the histories of this period are written, as they're already being, of course, General Allen will, without doubt, be one of the handful of most important generals in both Iraq and Afghanistan who really did so much in these campaigns.

He's a 1976 graduate of Annapolis, had a career with many different assignments as is typical of our modern American military. But one of them that's most notable, he was an architect of the modern infantry officer course at Quantico, which is one of the most fabled and toughest courses and training regimens in the entire U.S. military.

He then was rewarded for this accomplishment and for many other things that he's done in his career by being the first Marine ever to be the superintendent at the Naval Academy in Annapolis. And I think for those of you who appreciate military culture, even though the Marines and the Navy are part of a joint team and very close to each other, you'll recognize the kind of special person that needed to be available before the Navy would ever be comfortable with a Marine running Annapolis. And he did so with distinction.

As you know, he was the Deputy Commanding General in Al Anbar Province during the famous period of the surge in Iraq when the awakening began in that region, and the United States figured out how to reinforce it, how to encourage it. And then David Petraeus later came into the command, and the whole thing took off. But General Allen was in Anbar through that period of time and a crucial player in the Sunni Awakening and the broader surge effort in that part of Iraq.

He then went to Central Command, where he spent three years as the Deputy Commanding General, Deputy Combatant Commander, at Central Command, obviously overseeing Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, and many other key parts of the world, key crisis zones. And then he was asked by the President to assume command in Afghanistan and to relieve General David Petraeus in July of 2011. He then spent 19 months, as I say, in command there during a crucial period where, among other things, he had to up the effort and the intensity on the fight, or keep a very high level going, while also beginning the major downsizing of U.S. forces, because, as you know, he began with 100,000 American troops and wound up with about 68,000, and had to do all that through a fighting season last year.

So we are really pleased to have General Allen with us today. We're going to talk, as you know, about the campaign, about the conditions today in Afghanistan, about the future. He and I will speak for maybe a half hour with a back and forth set of discussions and questions, and then we'll look forward to you and your participation.

But before we do all that, both on behalf of all the troops, all the tens of thousands of Americans and others that he commanded who we want to thank, and also especially to thank him for his service, please join me in giving a big round of applause to General Allen.

GENERAL ALLEN: Thanks very much.

MR. O'HANLON: Well, General, it's just great to have you here, and I want to begin -- I know we're not going to have a lot of happy talk today, but there are a lot of good things happening in Afghanistan. And I think most people are unaware of some of the positive that's been going on and that happened on your watch. And so without ignoring the negative, which we'll certainly be factoring into the discussion as well, I wondered if we could begin by just talking a little bit about two or three of the biggest positive developments that you saw on your watch.

GENERAL ALLEN: Well, I think the coherence of the organization of the ANSF, from where I found it when I arrived in the summer of 2011 to where it is today, has really been dramatic. And it has been delivered to this point because of the hard work of an awful lot of folks. Stan McChrystal did great work in that area, Bill Caldwell working very closely with him. Dave Petraeus, of course, carried it to the next level. And we were on track for the ANSF to really come online as I arrived in 2011.

One of my first priorities, of course, when I gave my introductory remarks to my commanders about an hour after I took command, was one of the principle priorities that we were going to have to face during the period of the next couple of years was to move the ANSF into the lead, and to get them into the lead for the purposes of maintaining and operating and conducting their own campaign. We had to build on the organizational capacity of the ANSF, build on the capacity of its leadership, work very, very resolutely to create the support establishment necessary to build and sustain the ANSF.

So it has come a very long way. Its school system, the Afghanistan military academy, soon to be the officer school, which has been euphemistically the Sandhurst and the Sand, the various MOS, military occupational specialty schools. All of

those were under construction, if you will, at the time, which has given the ANSF the capacity to move from being, in essence, an infantry force to an integrated force of the various arms.

That's the first thing. And I think that the capacity of those schools to build the specialty fields that we need within the ANSF has been really dramatic in that regard, so that we are now beginning to see, and there's still significant work remaining, for the build out of the ANSF. It's not completely built until the end of 2013 actually. We're still fielding a significant amount of the force, although it's mostly recruiting.

But such areas as logistics, transportation, engineering, explosive ordnance disposal, aviation crewmanship, all of those things are beginning to emerge as viable occupational specialties, something we could not have imagined 20 months ago, 20 plus months ago. We were really just getting into the business of specialties within the ANSF.

I think another very positive development has been the literacy training. Again, it was an idea of Stan McChrystal's, it was implemented by Dave Petreaus, and certainly very strongly carried out by both Bill Caldwell and then Dan Bolger as Naval Training Mission, Afghanistan. The concept of giving the Afghans some capacity to be literate, to capitalize on the program training environment in which the soldiers and the police were entering the service, to give them some capacity initially to read and write and to make their numbers at a first grade level with the idea of being able to take that up to the third grade level over time.

Today over half the ANSF has the capacity to read and write to a first grade level, and we intend ultimately -- I know Joe Dunford will continue this process -- to continue, to not just emphasize the continuation of that program at the basic or entry level, but to continue the -- to emphasize the continued learning of the Afghan soldiers

and police through the period of time of their enlistment so that this becomes not just an initiative which is useful for military or police operations. It's an initiative that has the potential to change society in many respects.

And so when you have that many folks who are returning to their villages after successful enlistments who are able to read and write, who are able to make their numbers and express them, this has the potential for some pretty dramatic change.

Across the country I think there were other important outcomes of where we found the ANSF in 2011 to where we are today, which is that the securing of large segments of the population where other things could now happen. You wrote about it with Michelle, I thought in a very good piece with respect to what you discovered in Kandahar. And the reality is that when I traveled in my battlefield circulation during my final months in Afghanistan, I tended to visit more the Afghanistan forces than our forces because I wanted to see how they were doing, how their command and control was coming online, how they were doing with their planning, how they were executing their operations and missions.

And it was really inspiring frankly on many occasions to talk with the ANSF leadership down to the brigade level, and sometimes as low as the company level, that the price that they have paid frankly to liberate substantial segments of the population have resulted in opportunities to embed health care, health care access, getting school under way, protecting schools in communities. It has really, I think, enhanced the capacity of the civil population to benefit directly from the activities of the ANSF as they have gotten bigger, as they have become more professional, as they become more aggressive in the battle space.

And so there are some real early indicators of how an ANSF that is integrated, an ANSF that is professionally developed and professionally trained, that has

the capacity for coherent planning, mission execution, sustainment in the field, there are early indicators that as this force becomes more proficient as we field the entire force as it works its way through the 2013 fighting season, advised by ISAF forces, that we get some indication of how over the long term the civil society will benefit by greater access to those services and educational opportunities that will come from a secure Afghanistan.

So some significant changes and some significant advantages to the Afghan people. You know, the numbers vary from conversation to conversation, but when, you know, eight to nine million Afghan children are in school today and about 40 percent of them are girls, young women, that is a dramatic change.

And if I encountered one thing throughout my circulation in the battle space or my circulation around Afghanistan, it was the enthusiasm of this new generation of Afghans for their education. And they saw very much that their education was not just a key to employment. They saw that their education was a key to the future of Afghanistan. And I thought that was very positive and very much an indicator of the sense of this new generation of Afghans who see the future of Afghanistan very much about Afghanistan and less about the future of Afghanistan being defined by an ethnicity or a tribal orientation.

And to that extent, I did spend time with the schools. And one of the schools in particular I spent a lot of time with in Kabul. And it was a school where the youngsters all, almost to a person. And we sponsored them with scholarships, almost to a person. These youngsters saw their future in Afghanistan tied to their own profession, whether it be doctor. She wanted to be a doctor. He wanted to be a lawyer. She wanted to be an engineer. Whatever it might be, they saw their future as tied to Afghanistan and not to a job, and not to necessarily their tribe or their ethnicity.

And I think where we have come from the middle of 2011 to where we

are today, in so many ways with the development of the ANSF and their capacity to operate in the field. And while much work remains to be done, this has been a real benefit to Afghanistan as a state and Afghanistan as a people in the 19 or 20 months that I was there. But again, I have to emphasize it was the result of the hard work of my predecessors as well.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. And, of course, I should've recognized all the NATO allies that you command. I think you had a 48-nation coalition in addition to all the American troops --

GENERAL ALLEN: Fifty.

MR. O'HANLON: Yeah, 50-nation coalition. I want to come back in a moment to some of the specifics of the Afghanistan National Security Forces as you were just describing them. And just for those of you who don't follow the stuff all the time, it encompasses about a half dozen organizations: the Afghan army and air force, and then different parts of the Afghan police. And I'm sure we'll get into that in a little bit.

For those who are skeptical of this mission, and we all know that a lot of Americans are, and a lot of Americans are tired of it. Those of you who have been there have a right to be more tired of it than the rest of us. But the country in general has some war fatigue and is dubious that we can really be successful.

What I wanted to do next was to ask you to maybe tell us a story of where we are in the war compared to where we had hoped to be, where we thought we would be at this point. You've been watching this carefully in important jobs relating to this mission now for almost five years going back to when you started at Central Command. And during the McChrystal review, I think it's fair to say that a lot of people hoped that things could turn a little more quickly, that the Taliban could be weakened perhaps a little more than they've been, that the Afghan government could be made a

little more effective and a little less corrupt, that Pakistan could be persuaded to be a little more supportive. We'll come back to all those specifics or you can get into it now.

But I wondered if you could tell us a big picture story. Were you frustrated by where the war was when you arrived? Were you still fundamentally frustrated with where it was when you left, or did you feel that there was still a generally positive narrative even in big picture terms? You mentioned some specific encouraging signs with the Afghan army and the population and its commitment to the country. But when you put the whole thing together, do you still believe in the mission? Do you still think we're being relatively successful or that we have a decent prospect for at least a modest level of success in the end?

GENERAL ALLEN: Well, the short answer to that is yes. One of the comments you made earlier in your question about fatigue is those of us I think who have been closest to the mission are perhaps those of us who believe in it the most. So I'm not fatigued by it. I was tired every now and again, but I wasn't fatigued by it. And, in fact, as I was coming out of the mission, I felt far more optimistic about what success might look like than I was when I went into the mission, and largely because I think in so many ways we were beginning to see the ANSF by the end of '12, and as we were seeing the ANSF ultimately to take shape in '13 and in '14, to give us reason for hope.

As I think we all would understand the capacity for political development, economic development, those kinds of indicators in a campaign like this typically will lag the security achievements and the security accomplishments. And so while probably each of us would have liked to have seen greater capacity building in that regard -- I'm not talking nation building, I'm talking capacity building in certain of the ministries and the rule of law, countering corruption, et cetera -- I was confident that over time we could achieve levels of capacity, not during the period from now until the end of 2014, but in the

period after that, during this decade of transformation, which I think usefully emerged from the bond to conference, where we had the capability over the long term to build the capacity and the economic opportunity necessary for Afghanistan to achieve stability.

Now in the short term, let me put it in operational terms what I think happened in 2012, which has helped us to set the conditions for 2013, because 2013 is really the year that sets the stage for the accomplishments of 2014, how we anticipate seeing that unfold.

In 2012, we did a number of things, all generally simultaneously. It was really a momentous year in that regard. The first thing was to recover the phase two of the surge. The first phase was 10,000. We recovered it successfully by 31 December '11. The second phase was to recover the remaining 23,000 and to do so by the end of September. So we recovered the surge. And recovering it in September would lead you to believe that much of that surge was recovered during the fighting season.

Second, operationally and strategically, we were doing, in operational terms, we were conducting a battle handover from ISAF conventional forces, which were in the lead for combat operations, to the ANSF, the ANSF which were coming online in the 6th Corps areas, "corps" as in CORPS, the 6th Corps areas. We were conducting a battle handover where the ANSF were moving into the lead, and we were moving into a supporting role.

At the same as the ANSF were coming into their own in 2012, and brigade and corps level operations were increasingly the rule of thumb for operations in Afghanistan during that period of time, and increasingly are today, ISAF forces were converting. I made the decision to begin to convert my combat formations to advisory formations because as we had envisaged the unfolding of the campaign, there would come the time when we would transition being the force primarily in contact with the

enemy to the ANSF being the force primarily in contact with the enemy. And we would be in an advisory role. It is inherent in a counterinsurgency campaign.

So at the very moment that we're moving the ANSF into the lead, we're converting our ISAF forces from main force combat units to security force assistance units, teams initially, and now security force assistance brigades.

So we're recovering the surge. We're shifting in a battle handover from the ISAF forces being in the lead to the ANSF being in the lead. We're doing that while we're closing about 500 facilities. We had started when I arrived with a little over 800. We were closing facilities throughout the country. As our forces were beginning to retrograde, as our forces were beginning to leave the theater, we were closing and transferring bases to the Afghans as quickly as we could, but in a very programmed way to ensure that the platform of facilities supported the campaign overall, but supported the requirements for the Afghans and for us. And we did all of that in contact with the enemy. All of that in contact with the enemy.

So battle handover, recover 23,000 troops during a fighting season, shift from the ANSF in support to the ANSF in the lead, substantially reconfigure our forces from combat forces to advisory forces, and reposture them within the battle space, and shrink our basing platform. And we did all of that at the same time and in the same space.

And the ANSF very clearly began to move into the lead, and they felt comfortable with it, and we comfortable with it. And at the same time, frankly, we had to deal with such things as the urination video. We had to deal with the Koran burning. We had to deal with the Balumbi shooting. We had to deal with insider threat and insider attacks.

And within the context then of 2012, it was a truly momentous year as

the ANSF came online and as we began to transition our force ultimately to an advisory force, and then ultimately to a force which would shrink over time, diminish in size and in proximity across the country to a much smaller advisory force. That set the conditions for '13.

Today, and I've been away from the theater for a bit, but virtually all of our formations now are in the advisory configuration. The ANSF have planned -- they planned it on their own and we were advisors, so we were somewhere nearby and assisted them in the development of their O plan, Okab. And they are going to be fully in the lead for the fighting season of 2013 and 2014.

We have configured the force now to be in a very close relationship with the ANSF in terms of the advisory capacity. And over time as our numbers come down, the relationship with the ANSF will change. It will change from being pervasive across the battle space at the battalion level ultimately to arriving at a corps level advisory posture over time.

We'll continue to close bases. We have about 180 today still out of the original 800 or so. And we'll continue to close those bases as our numbers diminish and as our advisory posture changes, the idea being as the ANSF will be in the lead for this fighting season, we will be fully in support of the ANSF in this fighting season. And that's how we envisage that the campaign would unfold.

Frankly, the recovery of the 23,000 troops in the summer of 2012 provided us an opportunity to accelerate the ANSF moving into the lead ahead of where we thought they would be. They turned out to be better than we thought. They turned out to be better than they thought. And I think that that was a key realization for us in that regard.

Another couple of points, and you can cut me off if I'm going too long

here, but it's important. The Afghan local police was an entity that was really coming into its own at that time. And there are lots of anecdotal stories of problems with Afghan local police. I can assure you that in the context of how we have worked with the Afghans closely, the ministry of interior, to raise, and deploy, and train, and support the ALP, that is an institutional force at this point. But as the ALP became more institutionalized and became more pervasive, it became a real ground holding force for the purposes of the campaign. And it was a terrain denial force, if you will, in many respects. It denied the most important terrain in many areas of Afghanistan, the human terrain. It denied the terrain to the enemy, to the Taliban.

And so ALP was coming online in a very real way. It's well up over 20,000. You recall the original tashkil that was agreed to by the Afghans by the President was 30,000. The intent is to move that force to 45,000 over time, and we're trying to secure the resources for that now.

And then finally, at an organizational level, as I was dealing with re-shaping our main force units into advisory units, a very important organizational initiative occurred that in some cases might have been missed. And it was the creation of something called SOTF, the Special Operations Joint Task Force, or something also known as the NATO Special Operations Component Command, Afghanistan.

This is the first time in U.S. history, and probably in coalition history, where we have formed under a two-star a division-sized special operations command. And this organization brought under one umbrella all of the, what we call, three tribes of special operators that had existed apart in the battle space. And frankly, to that point, those three tribes came together for the very first time organizationally in my office. So they all answered vertically to me.

We achieved with the creation of the NSOC Alpha, meaning that NATO

was a party to this process as well, a far greater integration of our ISAF special operations forces, our CJSOTF, our Special Operations Joint Task Force, elements that were responsible for the training of the commandos and for the ALP. And my task force, or JSOC elements, we were able to far more effectively integrate those as an organization, more effectively integrate those with the battle space owners, and very importantly, lead the way for the Afghans as their special operations forces emerged, and as they have emerged, to be very effective, frankly, to lead the way in creating even better effectiveness for the Afghan special operations community, and begin to set the stage for their integration into Afghan plans as well.

So 2012 was a big year. 2012 set the conditions for 2013. '13 will be the year that the Afghans move into the lead fully for their campaign. And it'll be in 2013 that we set the conditions ultimately for '14. And in '14, of course, the two really big events, perhaps one of the most important events of the entire campaign, will be the election in Afghanistan in, I think, it's April 5th still the date, April 5th of 2014. We can talk about what role ISAF may have in support of that, but ISAF will be involved in supporting it. But really in supporting of the ANSF and providing probably unprecedented and unparalleled security to this election that we could not have even imagined in 2009.

And then finally, as ISAF's numbers draw down for the conclusion of the mission at the end of 2014, setting the conditions for the Enduring Presence Force -- NATO is going to call it Resolute Support -- setting the conditions both in terms of the capabilities and the locations and the basing platform so that that force can, if you will, be ready to go on the 1st of January 2015, fully integrated with the Afghans in terms of the advisory relationship that they'll have and the other support that the U.S. will have.

2013 is the year to set the conditions for 2014. 2014 will be the year where we terminate the ISAF mission and leap into the Enduring Presence or the long-

term advisory mission.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. And I'm just going to ask one more question and leave it to those of you who would like to speak to to bring up some of the other issues that are obviously central in this, like Pakistan and its role, like our relationship with President Karzai.

I just want to thank you for the focus on the military campaign and ask one more question to flesh that out a little further. And then again, we'll go to all of you. But it's actually a two -part question building, General, on what you've said.

I'd like to ask further just a simple down-to-earth basic question: do the Afghan army and police fight? You talked about this transition strategy and it's very well-constructed, and you've had a lot of success with it. But I'm sure, you know, it also has a theoretical feel to some people, and they probably still have a gnawing question.

Are the Afghan surges and police really going to fight? Are they fighting now? Are they really capable and willing to fight for their country as they leave? So that's the first part.

The second part is linking this now to the broader campaign, and it's a variant on the same issue of what the Afghan forces can really do on their own, because I think it's fair to say that while you had enough forces to do a lot, you didn't have all the forces that Stan McChrystal had originally envisioned, that the campaign plan had originally envisioned. The President accelerated the drawdown of U.S. forces somewhat just before you took command with a speech in 2011. Obviously you and he and others worked together, and he decided on the next phase of the drawdown plan: we'll cut our forces by half over the next year.

But this left certain parts of the east, in particular, I think less well tended to than the original concept would have called for. And so I wanted to ask you, are those

parts of the east of Afghanistan, in particular, where you didn't have the forces or the time to go after all the places you wanted to clear out Taliban sanctuaries, clear out weapons caches, create some of the local governance structures, the Afghan local police, the other forces that could hold land after NATO forces, with Afghan support, had cleared as the original campaign called for.

Can the Afghans do that now? In other words, is the remaining job of clearing parts of the east a bridge too far for them, or is it really within their capacity? And if it's not within their capacity, can we live with that? Can we live with an Afghanistan in which there are these pockets of insurgent sanctuaries throughout much of the countries east, very close to Kabul?

So again, two-part question. The simple part is, do they fight, and that's just sort of a gut instinct, a gut feel, from what you saw and from what you expect. And the second part is, in terms of the broader campaign plan, for those areas of the country we didn't get to, can they do it themselves now?

GENERAL ALLEN: Let me hit the second one first. The east is going to be a challenge for a long time for Afghanistan, and I think it's important. And sometimes this comes as a surprise when I say this - that on the 1st of January, there's still going to be fighting in 2015. There's still going to be fighting in Afghanistan.

The fact that the ISAF mission has ended and Resolute Support is under way as an advisory mission, there's still going to be fighting. And Afghanistan will join a long and distinguished list of countries that will be struggling in a post-conflict environment where it will have an insurgency in some parts of that country for an extended period of time. There'll be an insurgency in Afghanistan for some period.

The question really isn't whether there is the presence of an insurgency. The question is whether that insurgency ultimately is existential. And my sense is as time

has gone on, as I have watched the professional development and the capacity of the ANSF to improve, and as I see that continuing on the trajectory that we have set with the expectations that we can legitimately have, that over time we can posture the Afghan forces in the east to dominate that critical physical and human terrain that both provides the platform for continued operations over the long term, that provides us -- when I say "us," I often mean the Afghans as well -- that provides the Afghans the capacity in the context of something, the term that we're using now, the "layered defense in depth," which I think has real promise because the layered defense in depth, as it has been developed both theoretically in the last couple of years, and as it will be implemented practically over time, I think provides a lot of promise as the Afghans continue to build capacity and as we see developments east of the border take hold over time. It provides in my mind the capacity for the Afghans in the east to defend Kabul, which, of course, is the strategic center of gravity for Afghanistan over time.

And without spending a lot of time on the concept itself, starting from the bottom up, it is where the Afghan local police have been strategically sited to dominate the human terrain and, in some cases, physical terrain. It is the integration of the location of the Afghan local police with the Afghan National Police, who will be leading the ALP at the district level. It is the integration of police across the board, from the border police through the Afghan National Police, through the Afghan local police, and supported by Afghan Civil Order Police battalions, which are organized in several brigades. But in the east, those brigades are engaged in combat operations every single day, supporting the campaign that unfolds.

Those police units, which are oriented increasingly on law enforcement, but still in a counterinsurgency role - they'll be supported by the Afghan National Army. The 201st Corps north of Kabul, the 203rd Corps south of Kabul have really grown

dramatically both in their capacity and their numbers, adding both brigades and units and capacity over the last 18 months or so. And the latest commander in RC East, Bill Mavel, commanding the Big Red One, has been magnificent, frankly, in bringing the command elements of the 201st, General Waziri, in the north, and General Yaftali in the 203rd Corps, bringing them along to build the capacity for them to be able to fight credibly.

So we have this organic layering of police elements that will be supported by the maneuver elements of the police, the ANCOP, which in turn will be supported by the Afghan National Army units, which are being sited in key locations both to dominate terrain and from those locations to conduct operations against the ratlines coming out of Pakistan, potential safe havens in Afghanistan, and support areas.

They're additionally supported by some number, depending on the operation, of Afghan commandos, which have turned out to be very effective, Afghan special forces units, and increasingly in the near future you will see the fielding of the Mobile Strike Force battalions, five in the north and east and four in the south, which are highly mobile armored units that will give the Afghans the capability of moving effective strike force elements quickly to key locations in the battle space to support the ANA, who in turn are supporting the police.

If I had a map, I could lay this out for you in ways which I think would give you a sense that in the east, while it would have been useful to have conventional forces for ISAF to conduct longer-term operations, we're just not going to have the time, and we won't have the forces. But I believe that the Afghans -- in fact, I don't believe, I know -- the Afghans have embraced the concept of the layered defense in depth. They're planning for it now. And over time, as those forces, MSV, mobile strike force vehicles, as they come online, as the Afghans layer their defenses, I have more confidence that they'll be able to control the security situation in the east as time goes on.

It's a tough question, and it is not one that can be rendered in an easy answer. It will be the challenge. In the east will ultimately be the challenge: its proximity to the Pakistani border, the nature of the sanctuaries and safe havens in Pakistan, whether those ultimately are pressured or disrupted over time. All of those issues over time will affect the security situation in the east.

In the meantime, if the security situation with respect to the federally administered tribal areas doesn't substantially turn in favor of the long-term outcome in Afghanistan, in other words, if they aren't pressured, if there isn't some form of reconciliation, partial or full, I believe that over the long term, the layered defense in depth offers us the greatest potential to dominate the human and the physical terrain in the north, north of Kabul, and in the east, north of Kabul and south of Kabul, in a way that can defend the capital.

It's a complicated answer, but I hope I was able to render it in some respect.

And do they fight? Well, Afghans fight very well frankly. The issue for effectiveness of individual units is really your question I think. I have seldom seen occasions where the first man in the stack of an Afghan unit going into a building where the chances are pretty good that the first man is going to have a pretty tough time, you don't see Afghans shrink from that.

But as is the case with any American unit, the effectiveness of the unit is typically defined by the commander. And there's an old saying in our forces, in any force, that no unit can be better than the inherent weaknesses of its commander. And often by extension it's officers, and by extension even more, it's staff NCOs.

You know, we've recognized this, and we have been, I think, in good partnership with Minister Mohammadi at MOD, and Minister Patang in the MOI, both of

whom have gone to the president, both of whom received permission to conduct pretty extensive leadership screening. And I know that B.K. Mohammadi has begun to fire and remove a number of commanders who are either incompetent or who are homesteaders. They've been there forever, or they're corrupt. The idea being in so many ways to improve the capacity of the leadership of the Afghan forces that both lead by example and lead from the front morally and spiritually, but lead by example. And also lead competently as well.

You know, we're still suffering at the more senior ranks than the Afghan military, mid-ranks and senior ranks, from a dearth of education. And so many of these commanders who were very capable Jihadi fighters, and they fought the Taliban during the civil war in an environment where staff leadership is important for the development of coherent plans for large-scale operations, corps level, brigade level, kandak level operations. We've got work to do to build that leadership.

There has been an increase in the last several months of the attrition in the army. The Afghans are getting after that. And in their view, much of the problem associated with attrition is associated with leadership and the conditions under which the troops are living. And to their credit, they're working hard to get after those attrition numbers by ferreting out those leaders that need to go, but also very closely examining the environment in which the Afghan troops are living.

So the Afghans, I don't have any concerns about the Afghans fighting. The individual Afghan is a very brave policeman or a soldier. The issue isn't that necessarily. The issue is can we produce leadership and coherent staff capabilities that can focus and take advantage of this inherent marshal spirit that we find in the Afghan individuals and produce coherent fighting units out of that. That's the challenge.

We've got a lot of work to do to build the professionalism of the Afghan

army. They're enthusiastic about it. But this is a very new army. In many respects, euphemistically, we're building this airplane while it's in flight. Troops go from training ground to the battle ground, and some of these troops have been from their recruit training fighting constantly now for years.

And so there are demands and sacrifices made by these forces as they're coming online that we would find challenging ourselves if we had to deal with them. And so Afghan soldiers, Afghan police are fighters. Our challenge is whether the leadership ultimately will be able to lead them, and that is a major objective of where we are today.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Fascinating answer. Let's go to the crowd. Let's please start here in the front row. If you can wait for a microphone, and then identify yourself, please, and try to limit yourself to just one question, we'd appreciate it.

GENERAL ALLEN: Yeah, one question and six parts perhaps.

MR. O'HANLON: I set a bad example with one question and two parts already. But right up here in the front row, please.

MR. STEWART: All right, thank you. Phil Stewart from Reuters.

GENERAL ALLEN: Good to see you, Phil.

MR. STEWART: A lot of us -- some of us here were with Secretary Hagel on the last trip to Afghanistan when Karzai made his remarks about collusion between NATO forces and the Taliban.

Do you believe that President Karzai's assertions of sovereignty and these comments could threaten the strategy that you and others have laid out? And what would you say to the American people who have concerns about what kind of partner the U.S. has in President Karzai? Thank you.

GENERAL ALLEN: It's a complex answer frankly. I've known President Karzai very well now for some period of time. Let me just take a minute and talk about my own relationship with him because it's in that context that I hear his comments.

I've known him since early '09, but got to know him obviously very well from the time I took command in mid-'11.

To draw a phrase from Ryan Crocker's book, President Karzai has the hardest job on the planet, and with the numbers of years that he has been in place and the things that he has to deal with on a regular basis, he does have a difficult mission. He does have a difficult set of challenges on any given day on virtually all issues.

He has to balance a domestic constituency that is both tribal and ethnic. He has to balance his rhetoric with the potential for peace. He has to balance what he says with regard to his regional neighbors. You know, all of that goes into the pot, I think, in terms of what he says, and how he says it, and when he says it, and where he says it.

When I was in Afghanistan, my mother passed away and I didn't tell anybody. I didn't want anyone to focus on it. I didn't tell him, of course. And eventually I had the chance to come home and to lay my mother to rest. And afterwards, my family, we were having dinner, and he called me -- I got a call that the palace wanted to talk to me at a diner out in the Shenandoah Valley, and I thought, this is not good.

So I went outside and took the call. It was President Karzai who said, I just learned that your mother passed. He said, why didn't you tell me? And I said, Mr. President, you carry the weight of the world on your shoulders for your people, and I didn't want to add to your burdens. But he said, our mothers are precious to us. Our families are precious to us. And I just wanted you to know even though I just learned about it, that I wanted you to have my condolences. I wanted you to know how sorry I am for your loss. Now he didn't have to do that.

And so the relationship that we had, and he called me after I came back here just to offer his best wishes, he said, we didn't see eye to eye on a number of things. We didn't see eye to eye on a lot of things actually. But he said, you did what you believed was the best for your country, and I have tried to do the best that I believe I can do for my country.

So with that as context, he has to balance a lot of things in the palace, in Kabul, and across the country in what he says. And often those remarks, I believe, are intended to draw the distinction between him as the leader of Afghanistan and those who have supported him from the international community for some period of time so that he does appear to be the sovereignty and independent leader of a country seeking to move from a post-conflict environment to a developing society.

And sometimes that rhetoric is harsh. And we don't have to agree with it. We don't have to condone it. We don't have to like it. And on those occasions where I've publicly been confronted, in testimony primarily, with some of his rhetoric, I, in fact, reject it. And I reject comments which would put our troops at risk, that would put his troops at risk.

And if, in fact, the president truly does believe that U.S. is colluding with the Taliban, I'm here to tell you I would know. And we ain't, and we don't intend to.

But I would ask the question, what makes you believe that, Mr. President? What is it that causes you to believe that to the extent that you would say that publicly, with the risks, not just of alienating the United States, but of alienating your own population? Because his population, I think, the people of Afghanistan, my own experience is, and, again, I've spent a lot of time amongst the people. While they may be ready for foreign forces to go home, they do, in fact, have very strong views about America and about international forces.

They're not anti-American. They're anti-international. But they recognize that sooner or later the international forces, the foreign forces, will go home. But I don't believe that the Afghan people are anti-foreign or anti-American.

So I think the first thing I would say to the American people is, the Afghan people are deeply, deeply appreciative of the sacrifices that the international community has made for them. They understand what has been done. In Kandahar last year during Ramazan, as it's called, I would typically give Zakat to the families of Afghans who have lost sons or husbands fighting -- police. And there was an Afghan father who came to me, and I gave him Zakat, and offered him my prayers and my support. And his comment to me was, I have lost with this death of my son, four sons, and I'm ready to give them all to this cause. And I cannot thank you enough for the blood you have shed on behalf of Afghanistan.

So the Afghan people I think are very knowledgeable of what we have done in that country, what we have done with them, the share sacrifice that we have made, what we've done for them. And I also can tell you that President Karzai understands that as well, and he has offered his thanks. He has offered his acknowledgement.

And so I try to keep in context the rhetoric. I try to understand why he would say things that he says. And on those occasions where things like "collusion with the Taliban to maintain an unstable security environment for our perpetual presence," I would simply as the commander there for 19 months, that is not correct. I would be very happy to see what proof would lead him to make those kinds of comments.

But I also had a strong relationship with him. And on those occasions, for example, with the urination video which prompted the first shootings of advisors, with the tragic, frankly, the tragic burning of the religious materials, the Koran, with the

Balumbi shooting, with the insider attacks, the strength of our relationship and his commitment to the outcome, his commitment to the campaign, was such that these events were absorbed by the strength of the relationship. They didn't become events that broke the relationship.

And so, yes, we're going to have rocky moments, and there are going to be words that'll be spoken. We don't have to like them, and we can even condemn them. But the reality is, he is the democratically elected president of a nation that we are seeking to make a sovereignty state with the blood of our young women and our men. And there will be occasions where we will not get along. There will be occasions where we will be openly antagonistic towards each other. But on the whole -- on the whole -- the relationship is strong. The relationship is resilient, and I believe that the relationship is sufficiently strong foundationally that it will deliver the campaign to the end of 2014 successfully.

MR. O'HANLON: Before we go to Harlan right behind, I want to just ask you to follow up, General, if I could on the issue of insider attacks. We've talked about it before. You've talked about it before a great deal. I know a lot of Americans have it on their mind. I wonder if you could just mention two or three of the things that were most important that you put into effect over the last 19 months with others that will hopefully continue to reduce this, which thankfully is down in recent months -- knock on wood -- by at least half. But could you just say a couple of words on that subject?

GENERAL ALLEN: This may have been one of the great strategic risks of the campaign frankly. You know, the Taliban are not going to defeat us or the Afghans militarily. But what the insider threat did was it truly threatened the national will of the elements within the coalition. And I have said publicly before, we're willing to bear great sacrifice on behalf of this campaign, but we're not willing to be murdered for it.

And so I think as this threat became more apparent, and it had been going on for some time, but in the summer of '12, it became both numerically and tragically a really prominent dimension of the political and campaign landscape. And so we looked very, very hard at this to understand what we had in front of us.

I was, as I did periodically when I had to leave theater to testify or to visit Brussels, I would stop at capitals of key troop contributing nations. And I was in Berlin when I got the phone call that four French advisors had just been shot and killed by an Afghan soldier. And later we were to learn that he had not seen, but had learned -- had heard of the urination video and pulled the trigger based on that.

And I was literally two hours from getting on an airplane to fly from Berlin to Paris where, as I got off the airplane, I was handed a newspaper by the attaché, and there was an article in the newspaper -- I believe it was the *International Tribune* -- that said in essence that the difficulties that we have with Afghans are cultural difficulties, and they were irreconcilable.

So here I am arriving in Paris the morning of that tragedy, and it would appear that the literature associated with this crisis is being defined by this being an irreconcilable social issue, neither of which were particularly comfortable spots to be in.

We spent a lot of time trying to understand what was at work here with the insider threats. And I rejected the sole explanation that this was cultural from the beginning. I had been an advisor in other places -- I've served in countries around the world, some of them developing -- where the cultures were very different, very different. And I had not experienced before any occasion where based solely on cultural differences the reasons were sufficient to kill the advisors or to kill the foreign forces. So it was more than that.

And as time went on, we began to listen to the chatter amongst Taliban,

that by attacking the advisory forces, they sought to create a crisis, both in terms of if they could separate us along the seam. As our advisory forces increasingly became integrated into the Afghan forces, if they could separate us along the seam of where our advisors were up close to the Afghans by forcing us to change our operational posture with respect to how we deployed our advisors, it would have the effect of striking a blow at the coalition. It would also have the effect of diminishing the training and the capacity building of the Afghans.

And so I chose as the commander very early along to determine that this was an enemy threat. And by challenging it as an enemy threat, we were able to take, I think, a more coherent set of measures to deal with the threat than to treat it as a cultural issue with only cultural training as the prescribed outcome.

And so we swam upstream. We looked at the training from the moment someone arrived in a unit for deployment, the final training exercises that they would prior to departing the States, or from Europe, or from NATO, the training that they received in theater, and then the moment-to-moment individual measures that would be taken to protect our forces on the ground in the proximity of our Afghan allies.

We looked at all of that with an eye towards reducing our vulnerabilities and improving our strength vis-a-vis the Afghans without alienating, frankly, our allies because we had to do that as well. And so everything from the concept of the guardian angel to a comprehensive training program back at home station was the result.

We also worked closely with the Afghans. It's not well known, but the Afghans suffered tremendous casualties themselves from what they call green on green. Green on blue is the Afghanistan attack of ISAF forces. Green on green is Afghan on Afghan. And within just the last 72 hours, there have been a number of Afghans in an ALP unit as I recall, at least five ALP guardians were killed by a fellow ALP patrolman.

And so we worked very closely with the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defense, to begin the process of building both capabilities within the ANSF to deal with this threat, but also to build joint capabilities that would permit us together to deal with this, because this wasn't just a threat oriented at ISAF and U.S. forces. It was a threat that was certainly oriented at the Afghans as well.

And the result of that were bilateral measures both at a counterintelligence and an intelligence level, improvement in vetting, improvement in information and intelligence sharing, improved cultural understanding. The Afghans actually started to conduct cultural training of their own about us and why we are different just as we enhanced our own cultural understanding of Islam, of Ramadzan, the inherent nature of the Afghan people at a tribal and ethnic level. We did all of that. We integrated it together both within ISAF and with the ANSF. And knock wood, as you said a moment ago, the numbers are down. If there is one number, it's one number too darn many because it's tragic.

But I believe that we have both taken the measures necessary to defend the force, but also taken the measures necessary at a strategic level to protect the campaign. And that's really important.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Harlan.

MR. ALMAN: I'm Harlan Alman, and many years ago I had the pleasure of serving under Captain John Allen at CSIS.

My question is also to you, Michael, because you just came back from Afghanistan, along with Tony Cordesman. If you read or listen to Tony's briefing, it's entirely negative about the prospects. He's concerned about governance, rule of law. He is concerned about the economics, the fact that the GDP is being sustained by us. And in terms of security, he's very worried that the enabling forces that will stay behind

are simply not going to be there in sufficient numbers.

But curiously, his conclusion is quite optimistic in which he argues that if we're prepared to keep thousands of support and military troops there and spend tens of billions of dollars, the situation is reconcilable.

Given the politics in the United States, given crises likely to arise over Iran, Syria, Korea, the elections in Pakistan which could see Nawaz Sharif, who's no friend of the United States, in power, it seems to me that our appetite for a long-term presence in Afghanistan with sufficient resources certainly is not going to be very great. If that proves to be the case, and I agree with Tony's conclusion that I think that the situation could be redeemable, but I don't know that we can pay the price. Is there a plan B, C, or D?

MR. O'HANLON: Shall I start, or would you like to start?

GENERAL ALLEN: No, go ahead.

MR. O'HANLON: And I had a very good trip with Tony Cordesman as I always do when I get to travel with him, very bright guy, and a lot of good recommendations and specific observations that he makes. And I share his concern. I'm sure we all do. But just a couple of points.

One is that the question of whether the United States will continue to support this mission does turn largely on how well the Afghans do with their presidential election next year and who replaces President Karzai, and whether that process is seen as legitimate, and whether the successor to Karzai is seen as serious. And I think we have to figure out ways to use our influence to increase the likelihood of those kind of outcomes without trying to choose a candidate or choose a preferred winner.

And we can get into the details of that, but just one very specific point is that the Afghan machinery for watching elections, the Independent Electoral Commission,

the Electoral Complaints Commission, you know, they did a pretty good job in the last two elections because they're the ones that found the fraud. The elections weren't great, but the Afghans are the ones who found that. And I say that as a former international observer myself. We didn't find it. The Afghans found it.

But now it's crucial those organizations stay independent. And so one of the things we have to help do in the next few weeks and months is to try to support Afghans in Parliament and elsewhere who want to have a say in the CFDs for those commissions so that President Karzai doesn't have too much temptation to stack them with people that would support him. And I don't want to suggest Karzai's only motives would be unfortunate, but I think a democracy needs independent commissions.

Afghanistan's constitution, which is partly our doing because we helped them writ it, as you know, puts too much power in the hands of the president in general. He chooses not just the governors of the provinces as you know, but the mayors of every town in that country. It's unbelievable. And we, frankly, with all due respect to all the Americans who did great work on Afghanistan a decade ago, we botched this. And that constitution is going to be one of the things they have to debate and figure out how, I think, to amend.

But a short-term consequence is that these particular commissions need to be populated by people who are seen as representing all of Afghanistan and not one particular political interest. And then they can watch the elections, not just the voting, but the campaigning up until that point to see that the media cover all the different candidates, that allegations of impropriety are investigated, that political parties get technical support, not just President Karzai's own people. Those are the kinds of things we've got to focus on in the next year.

Just one more point, and I'll see if General Allen wants to also speak on

this. We need to avoid talking ourselves out of our own staying power. You know, we Americans are a little tired of this war, but we're also pretty resilient ourselves and pretty patient. This is 12 years now, and we're still at it.

We just went through a presidential race in which the whole country basically said we're tired of this war, we're not sure we believe in it. But neither Governor Romney nor President Obama, to their credit -- to their mutual credit -- talked about accelerating the drawdown just to get the heck out. There was no populist focus on just accelerating the drawdown even further. We went through all of 2012 with no major speech by the President or Governor Romney on how we should hurry up our departure.

On top of that, if you look at our history, whether it's with the Middle East, whether it's with Korea and Taiwan in earlier periods, we spent decades supporting young democracies that were not always doing that well, not always that impressive, because we recognized that we had security interests. It took, as you know better than I, it took South Korea four decades to get to the point of a legitimate election, and we stood by them the whole time.

So if we have our security interests engaged and if we see progress, even gradual progress, in the partner country, I think we Americans are capable of doing what I would consider the right thing and sticking with it. And let's not talk ourselves out of our own ability to stay with something that's important for our own long-term interests before we even try.

GENERAL ALLEN: And I agree with all that Mike has said. I think it's really important, the point he made, about other post-conflicts societies where we've had a long-term presence. And because of staying power, we have seen over time these societies emerge to be in some cases the global example of democracy or the ability to develop an economy.

And I won't go into specifics with any one particular country, but a couple of points I would make. One is that as is always the case in a campaign like this, the ability to conduct governmental reforms in a young democracy is just difficult. It's hard. This is a new and increasingly assertive legislature. They're boisterous. They're aggressive and assertive. All of those thing are positive with respect to where I think the JERGAS seek to go in Afghanistan. That's a positive thing. But this is a young democracy, and it's early in this period.

The good news is in ways that other countries that we've been involved in over time, the good news is first that Afghanistan sits on top of trillions of dollars of natural resources, and it spans a very wide spectrum of opportunity, from energy, through rare earth, to strategic minerals, to gems and gold. It's just vast, vast wealth. Getting at it is going to be the challenge.

And so the next bit of treat wealth that Afghanistan has to develop isn't the mining industry. It needs to develop its human capital. And we have seen other countries where at this moment in its emergence from a post-conflict or a conflict environment to a post-conflict or a development environment, where the national leadership chose to invest in the youth. And there are countries around the world, any Democratic Party in this room can tip them off pretty quickly, where those early strategic decisions to develop the youth of the country have delivered relatively small countries with great capacity over time. And we might use Korea as an example with respect to how we stuck with Korea.

And to Harland's very important point in his question about whether there is an affordability dimension to our long-term staying, we don't need to have the kinds of forces in South Korea to preserve Northeast Asian security for decades that we would need to have in Afghanistan. The Afghan forces are going to be fully built at 352,000 at

the end of this year. They'll have had two full fighting seasons under their belt before we shift to the long-term enduring presence and advisory mission. There is very little likelihood that Afghanistan sits in an environment where, unlike in Korea, there could be a resurgence of a North Korean invasion helped potentially by two communist super powers.

So the kind of international presence ultimately to support the security environment would be different in Afghanistan. It would be less. It would be tailored closely to developing the professionalization or professionalism of the force and the capacity of the force.

As well I think as I've said, governance, reform, fighting corruption, developing the economic capacity of the country, those will lag the security environment. And we should expect that they will. The good news is as we found in May of last year in Chicago, the 50 nations of ISAF, which is NATO and its 22 partners, are willing to contribute over time to the security environment, the security forces, of the Afghans.

And although I don't think the decision has been announced, there is very clear consideration that the Afghan security forces of 352,000 should remain at that number for some number of years after our mission is over. Now that's a signal of commitment over the long term, which is good for the Afghan people. It's good for the security environment of the country.

If that force remains intact for a number of years, it gives the next administration after President Karzai time to get its legs up under it, to pursue an agenda of reform, countering corruption. It gives the economy time to move into equilibrium after years and years of the distortion from wartime spending. That alone is a signal not just to the Afghan people. It's a signal to the Taliban that this very capable force, which is more capable by the day, will be out there for years after the ISAF mission is over. It's a signal

to Pakistan, who, if it's very concerned about the outcome in Afghanistan, it can give them greater confidence ultimately to pursue strategies which augur well for the security of Afghanistan, which, by the way, a secure Afghanistan is vital to the long-term security of Pakistan.

So, yeah, the challenges are really dramatic. The challenges are many. But we shouldn't be surprised that there will be substantial political reform that will still need to go on after 2014. There'll be a new administration. That administration will receive the support of the international community. Chicago was important, and Tokyo, who's even more important probably than Chicago. The long-term investment of something along the lines of $16 billion by 70 donor nations and organizations. All that augurs well for the future.

None of it can occur if there isn't a secure environment, and that's essential now for the remaining about 21 months on this campaign to do all we can both to shape the insurgency and to get the ANSF into the lead, and then to be organized in the post-2014 period with the kinds of forces there to provide the advice, the training, and the advisory capacity to continue the upward spiral of professional development within which then that white space purchased through the security forces we can see the forward movement of governmental reform embracing the law and the development of economic capacity.

MR. O'HANLON: Let's go over here. Doyle, I think about in the seventh row.

MR. MCMANUS: Thank you. Doyle McManus from the *Los Angeles Times*. General, Mike began this session by asking you for positive indicators, and you spoke convincingly and compellingly about the improving capability of the ANSF.

What do you worry about as you look at Afghanistan through '14 and

beyond? What are three or four things that could go wrong?

GENERAL ALLEN: I think one of the great unknowns for us is Pakistan. I'm very careful in how I address this challenge. For a long time we have pursued what folks will euphemistically call an AFPAK strategy, where there is this sense that Afghanistan's future will be defined by the involvement of Pakistan in some respects. Of course there's many other factors playing there.

But as time has gone on, it's become clearer to me as we have seen an uptick in the violence in Pakistan, as we have seen the challenges that Pakistani military have faced in the federally administered tribal areas, that a stable Afghanistan that is secure and confident in its future -- it doesn't have to be a finished product yet, but stable and confident, is as much of value to Pakistan as Pakistan is of value to the outcome in Afghanistan.

That said, the whole relationship with Pakistan is enormously complex. And I really am careful not to permit myself in conversations with others to fall into the trap oversimplifying the relationship of Pakistan and its role in the outcome in Afghanistan.

Pakistan has many challenges that it has to face today in and of itself that are long term in their origins that date back to the Soviet era, the Soviet war, the Jihadi residue associated with that, the emergence of extremism and radicalism. To its credit the Pakistani forces have been engaged in significant counterinsurgency operations in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, and I don't think that Pakistan gets the credit that it is due in terms of the extent of the operations that it has undertaken, the casualties that it has suffered, the sacrifices that the Pakistani people are taking on any given day with respect to a regional outcome. It's not just about Pakistan in the minds of many of their leaders. It's about a regional outcome.

So I dealt a lot with General Kayani on this issue. And we were able to see eye to eye on many issues with respect to the potential outcome of the region. And it was an outcome that benefited not just Afghanistan, but was an outcome that benefited Pakistan as well.

In that respect, I think while enormously tragic the cross border incident that occurred on the 25th and 26th of November 2011, while enormously tragic with the loss of those 24 young Pakistani soldiers, it created an environment where when we finally were able to sit down again, we were able in some respects to open a new chapter in our relationship. The conversations that we've had with Pakistani military leadership, and I have to be very clear with a caveat that my involvement was primarily with the Pakistani military and not with the political environment in Islamabad. So it was Rawalpindi primarily. The environment in which we find ourselves today is far more conducive than frankly where I found it when I took command.

First of all, I would say that there is real emphasis now on Pakistan seeking a constructive bilateral relationship with the Afghan National Security Forces. This is relatively new. It is one that will not come easily. It's going to require some building because there are trust issues on both sides.

We're seeing a willingness by the Pakistani military to conduct complementary operations on each side of the border, which we did years ago, but they were frozen in time as a result of a variety of issues: Abbottabad, the cross border crisis, and so on.

We signed a cross border SOP for the first time between ISAF, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. And we have structured with greater coherence the tripartite commission where there three leaders, the three four stars and then all of their subordinates are engaged in both strategic operational and tactical conversations.

That said, with all of that potential promise, it still remains the border area, and the insurgency on both sides, frankly, of the border remains, I think, one of the principle obstacles and one of the principle potential sources of downturn for the campaign. It is for that reason that we have pursued this concept of the layered defense in depth. If we were to see some form of military pressure on the Hakanis or the Higg, or the Commander Nazir group -- now absent Commander Nazir.

And if we were able to see some kind of pressure in that regard, that could facilitate movement and reconciliation. But if we don't see that, we can't afford not to take those measures necessary to dominate the ground between the border and the strategic center of gravity, which is Kabul, and ultimately to provide for security of the city.

So the relationship with Pakistan is complex, but there is promise there that I had not seen before during my tour which I believe can be leveraged. The conversations at a bilateral level have turned out to be promising. The potential for Afghans and Pakistanis to share both school seats, to exchange visitors. We now have a Pakistani brigadier in the headquarters of ISAF. Lots of positive indicators.

But much, much more needs to be done, and the border region is going to be a source of instability for both countries. And it is there where common ground can be found. But it is also there where the great threat, I think, at an operational level remains.

The other thing, to your question, is a really important one that I worry about, is an absence of an ability to affect the kinds of reforms necessary to get after corruption frankly. All young democracies are at risk from corruption because inherent to the establishment of democracy is the strengthening of institutions. And in environments where institutions ultimately are strengthened, they are a direct threat to the criminal networks and the criminal patronage networks.

And so what we will find over time, we find it now, but we'll find it over time is that the criminality and the sources of corruption will be in direct competition and direct contrast to our efforts to strengthen institutions in a way that can create an environment for democracy to take root and ultimately to flourish.

And so beyond the border regions and the unknowns associated with how the relationship with Pakistan will develop, it is corruption which I think I spent a lot of my time understanding and creating capacity to deal with. And it will be that which I think will be one of the principle challenges over time.

Thank you for that question.

MR. O'HANLON: I'm going to take two final questions together, and then we're going to have to conclude. So here in the front row and then in the fourth row, please. We'll take them both.

MR. RUTMAN: Thank you, General Allen. Paul Rutman of Bloomberg News.

GENERAL ALLEN: Good to see you again.

MR. RUTMAN: Good to see you. Before you left your job as the head of the ISAF forces, you did make a recommendation to the President on the full strength that would be required after 2014. There have been a lot of numbers. Former Secretary Panetta said 8,000 to 10,000. General Mattis has proposed 13,600. And the White House has said it could even be zero.

So I wanted to ask you what do you think is the ideal number, and is zero a realistic option that the U.S., in fact, is considering.

MR. O'HANLON: Since that one is going to be quick to answer, we'll take one more.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you, General. Thank you for your

service. If I may, could I ask you what are the things that you think Japan and South Korea have done not efficiently, and what in the post-Chinese '13 period, what can they do more? Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: I think I'll amend that question or add to it just to say if you want to talk more generally about the alliance and the coalition that you were able to command. Thanks. Over to you.

GENERAL ALLEN: I was never asked to conduct any analysis with respect to the zero option. First of all, I'll say I'm reluctant to shoot on Joe Dunford's target because there is still a strategic conversation under way with respect to what those numbers ultimately will be.

I believe we were all agreed that the outcome of the Enduring Presence force should be able to, as I think I may have said earlier today, build the capacity of the ministries, so ministerial capacity building within the ministry of interior and defense. Ensure that we're able to preserve the upward spiral of the schools and professional military education institutions. That would be the second priority.

The third would be a regional presence to continue the development of capacity of the Afghan corps and police zones, which may include, in fact, a national training center akin to the NTC as we know it in the United States at Fort Irwin or 29 Palms. And then with regard to U.S. forces specifically, forces that would support the chief of mission, the ambassador and his activities, but also I think importantly counterterrorism.

There is debate on what those numbers ought to be. I don't want to get into numbers now because the President hasn't announced his decision. But my sense is that where the conversation was trending, and I think it's important to understand that it's not just about the U.S. figure. It's about the coalition figure, and that we have seen

within the NATO context a real sense and willingness for partnership in this regard, that the numbers that I have seen I believe can accomplish those objectives that I mentioned a moment ago.

I believe we will be right on the edge of the resources, but I think we'll get the resources that will be necessary to accomplish those missions. But I really don't want to get into the numbers here because the decisions haven't ultimately been made. But the conversation has been rich. The discussion with respect to our objectives has been thorough.

And it goes importantly to the point about the ANSF and the post-2014 period. If that force, which will have two full fighting seasons under its belt by the time we transition to Resolute Support, if that force has progressed to the point where we think it will, that the desired objectives that I stated a moment ago with the numbers that have been discussed, I think that we'll be able to accomplish those missions.

And that's key because it demonstrates international commitment. It is a very important adjunct to the ANSF if they remain at that number for some period of time to continue the upward spiral. It's a powerful message to the Afghan people. It's a powerful message to the Taliban. It's a powerful message to the region. And all of that, I think, augurs well.

As I said before, this is not Northeast Asia where we'll need to keep large standing conventional formations to be ready to react to an invasion. These are forces that will be needed to continue the upward professionalization of an ANSF we've been working with now for some period of time, and ultimately will have two full fighting seasons under its belt by the time we get there. Good, important question.

But with regard to the coalition, from the moment I arrived it was clear to me that the coalition was the center of gravity for the campaign that ISAF wages. And

while there are 50 nations that have contributed troops in some form or another, there are many other nations that are not necessarily members of ISAF, but who have made enormous contributions to our outcome. And those contributions in the case, for example, of Japan or of Korea, have been very important contributions to development, very important contributions to police development, very important contributions to literacy, all of which are really essential over the long term in particular for the police.

The police have been fighting now for a long time as elements within the counterinsurgency force. And as is the case with any counterinsurgency campaign, the commander has to watch the operational environment very carefully because there will come a point when the insurgents have been defeated. And what will almost always be the criminal nature of insurgencies, and most insurgencies have a criminal dimension to them, where the criminality will become the principle challenge as opposed to a security challenge from the insurgents.

And in some parts of Afghanistan, we are there today. And so the police need to be able to transition smoothly from being what we call the trailing edge the counterinsurgency to the leading edge of law enforcement. And contributions by countries like Japan and Korea and others to the development of police and police capacity is helping us to make that critical transition from counterinsurgency to law enforcement in larger and larger portions of Afghanistan over time.

We wouldn't be where we are today in the campaign without the sacrifices of these many countries that have come together, historic common vision on this outcome. When you think about where Afghanistan is, when you think about the state of Afghanistan's economy, when you think about other countries in the past, very few have had 70 countries come together, 50 to pledge the blood of their precious children, others to put their economies and political viability on the line on behalf of

Afghanistan. And not just do it for a short period of time, but to do it for over a decade and to sign up for the Decade of Transformation.

So many of the countries, Japan and Korea of course are examples in this case, but many countries have pledged that kind of support for a very long time. And the Afghan people will never forget that. They will never forget that. I can tell you because I have seen the work of your countries, those countries, at work. And I have seen the Afghan appreciation and the mothers who have benefited from this, moved to tears when they think about all that has come to the children of Afghanistan and the women of Afghanistan.

And let me just end by saying that as my own career comes to a close shortly, it has been the greatest honor of my life to have command ISAF forces. It started at about 149,000, and it ended up where it was. I every day think about the 561 coalition troops who were killed in action fighting under my command. They're in my prayers every day, and the 5,500 who were wounded.

They're only a part of the larger number. Where we are today in this campaign, where we are in this conflict, what we have accomplished on behalf of the Afghan people has been from a long succession of young troops and their leaders being willing to shoulder this burden, to go far from their homes and to struggle on behalf of the Afghan people.

And while we all may have different views of the war and the struggle and the conflict, none of us should have anything other than the utmost respect for these young women and men who have, in some cases, given everything. All of have given something, some gave a lot, but many have given everything. And we should never forget that.

And that was the greatest honor of my life, and I am so happy to have

had that chance.

MR. O'HANLON: So thank you to all of them, and thank you, General, very much.

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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.

Carleton J. Anderson, III

(Signature and Seal on File)

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