



*Adjunct Professor of International Affairs  
West Point, NY*

October 22, 2009

**STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD  
SUBMITTED BY GENERAL BARRY R. McCAFFREY (USA, Ret.)**

**SUBMITTED TO: U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ARMED SERVICES  
COMMITTEE, SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND  
INVESTIGATIONS**

**SUBJECT: U.S. Strategy Options in Afghanistan**

**INTRODUCTION**

Chairman Snyder, Ranking Member Wittman, it is an honor to submit this statement to the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations for the hearing on U.S. strategy options in Afghanistan.

Our national security policy making process is relatively straightforward.

- The civilian leadership of the nation – the President, the Congress, and the appointed leaders of the Executive Branch – develop and articulate political-military strategies to attain critical national goals.
- Executive branch officials and uniformed military leaders then develop implementing operational and tactical plans, which are considered and approved by the National Command Authority in consultation with the Congress, which provides the requisite resources.

In some instances – such as the ongoing debate over how to implement the Administration’s strategy in Afghanistan – this policy development process is fairly transparent. In less than a year, the new Administration conducted a review of policies in Afghanistan and Pakistan, announced a new strategy, appointed new military commanders to head operations in those countries because of their demonstrated success in addressing insurgency within Iraq, and is now considering the recommendations of its on-the-ground senior commanders about how to accomplish the goals established in President Obama’s strategy. It is useful to review what was stated publicly at each of these critical junctures in order to understand the policy dilemma facing the administration today in Afghanistan.

**SUMMARY OF PRESIDENT OBAMA’S AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN STRATEGY  
(ANNOUNCED IN MARCH 2009)**

- The situation in Afghanistan: In the eight years since the removal of the Taliban from power in Afghanistan, the conflict in Afghanistan continues. The security situation in that country is worsening – insurgents control parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and attacks against U.S. and NATO forces and the Afghan government have risen steadily. We need a stronger, smarter and

## **EMBARGOED UNTIL THURSDAY, 22 OCTOBER 2009**

comprehensive strategy. We are no longer forced to deny resources to Afghanistan because of the heavy burden of the war in Iraq.

- The U.S. purpose in Afghanistan: Our objective is to prevent the fall of the Afghan government to the Taliban and prevent al Qaeda from operating unchallenged in either Pakistan or Afghanistan. Afghanistan must not again be a base for terrorists who want to kill Americans. A return to Taliban rule in Afghanistan would probably result in a return in force of al Qaeda terrorists and leave Afghanistan in perpetual violence. The NATO force and Afghan security elements must confront a common enemy that threatens both the United States and our friends and our allies. The people of Afghanistan and Pakistan have suffered the most at the hands of violent Islamic extremists.
- Key elements of the U.S. strategy to attain stated goals in Afghanistan:
  - Stronger, smarter and comprehensive strategy.
  - Provide resources to Afghanistan that were previously denied because of the burden of the war in Iraq.
  - Enhance the military, governance and economic capacity of Afghanistan.
  - Comprehensive campaign that involves more than bullets or bombs -- and features resources to strengthen democracy and build critical infrastructure (schools, roads, agriculture, hospitals).
  - Reverse the Taliban's growing control of the Pashtun people and promote a more capable and accountable Afghan government.
  - Take the fight to the Taliban in the south and the east in partnership with Afghan security forces. Go after insurgents along the border.
  - Provide greater physical security to enable Afghan elections to occur peacefully.
  - Shift the emphasis of our mission to equipping training and increasing the size of Afghan security forces. Build an Afghan army of 250,000 and a police force of 100,000 by 2011.
  - Address weaknesses of Afghanistan's elected government – corruption and inability to deliver basic services.
  - Develop an agricultural economy that is not dominated by illicit drugs.
  - Facilitate reconciliation among former enemies in every province.
  - Consistently assess our efforts to train Afghan security forces and our progress in combating insurgents. Ask whether we are using the right tools and tactics to make progress towards accomplishing our goals.

### **APPOINTMENT OF NEW LEADERSHIP TEAM IN AFGHANISTAN**

Within 60 days of articulating the President's new March 2009 strategy, the Administration correctly decided that new military leadership was required to implement that new strategy. As he announced the nominations of General Stanley McChrystal and LTG David Rodriguez to assume leadership of military operations in Afghanistan, Secretary of Defense Gates indicated that he expected new thinking and

## **EMBARGOED UNTIL THURSDAY, 22 OCTOBER 2009**

approaches from this extremely capable and experienced leadership team. Clearly, the Administration demanded that this new military team would provide rapid feedback subsequent to being confirmed by the Senate about how to operationalize the Administration's new strategy in Afghanistan.

General McChrystal is probably the most successful and courageous counter-terrorism fighter in the past 25 years. He summarized his understanding of Administration policy during his Senate confirmation process in June. In his written responses to questions from the Senate, General McChrystal:

- Restated the Administration's strategy: "The strategic goal to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda and its safe havens in Pakistan, and to prevent their return to Pakistan or Afghanistan is essential to the long term security of the United States, our allies, and the region."
- General McChrystal indicated that the "strategy calls for the resources necessary for a fully-resourced counterinsurgency. It promotes a whole-of-government integrated counterinsurgency approach to address challenges in the region. As a result, significantly more resources will be devoted to the civilian efforts in both Afghanistan and Pakistan."
- He outlined the major challenges he anticipated in Afghanistan:
  - First: "secure the population and separate them from the insurgents. Only where we can prevent insurgents from controlling the population through intimidation and coercion can we provide an opportunity for the Government of Afghanistan, with our support, to establish full legitimate governance and stability."
  - Second: "we must work to improve governance at every level in order to facilitate development and other activities that will strengthen the legitimacy of, and popular support for, the Government – and reduce insurgent control or influence."
  - Third: "increase the capacity of Afghan National Security Forces (Army and Police). Ultimately, security in Afghanistan must be provided by a combination of military and police forces of sufficient strength in personnel, equipment, and training to cover security missions ranging from national defense to local policing."
- General McChrystal signaled his intent to review the current assessment and the existing tactical plan and produce an Integrated Civilian-Military Plan. He stated he intended to designate development of Afghan National Security Forces as his highest priority task. The central focus of the US command would be the effective execution of counterinsurgency operations.

Clearly, General McChrystal interpreted that the centerpiece of the President's strategy should be counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. His subsequent recommendations on how to operationalize the President's strategy were expected to feature the principal elements of a COIN campaign. This should not have been a surprise to those who understood the implications of the Administration's strategy, who understand the senior military commanders' background and experience, and who are familiar with COIN operations.

### **COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS "101"**

In conventional warfare, the enemy's 'center of gravity' is generally considered to be his military forces and the conflict is usually between states.

## **EMBARGOED UNTIL THURSDAY, 22 OCTOBER 2009**

In an insurgency, civil-military operations are centered on the socio-economic-political arena -- not between opposing forces. The insurgency conflict is predominantly intrastate -- although external actors/forces are frequently involved. Finally, the insurgency center of gravity is legitimacy, popular support, and political power. Success in a COIN campaign is attained by depriving the insurgency of legitimacy and its ability to destabilize and replace a government.

Shared elements of successful COIN campaigns since World War II include:

- Strategies to address socio-economic-political injustice that allowed the insurgency to grow.
- Political and economic reforms to build legitimacy.
- Military operations to protect the population and infrastructure from insurgent attack and influence.
- Intelligence operations to identify and dismantle the insurgent leadership structure.
- Elimination and isolation of the insurgents' sources of support (both domestic and international).
- Recognition that an external power may be able to prevent an insurgency from overthrowing an existing government BUT that the only long-term defense against an insurgency is an effective and popularly accepted national government.

One of the principal admonitions of the German military theorist Carl von Clausewitz was that statesmen (i.e. political leaders) and commanders (military leaders) needed to establish an up front agreement on what kind of war they were embarking in. Clearly, both the Obama Administration and its recently appointed senior military leadership team agreed that the effort in Afghanistan was primarily a counterinsurgency, as opposed to a conventional conflict or a more artificially and infeasible limited counter-terrorist operation.

### **GENERAL MCCHRYSTAL'S ASSESSMENT & RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is useful to summarize the key points made by General McChrystal in his initial assessment of the situation in Afghanistan\* and his recommendations on how to meet those challenges.

1. The situation in Afghanistan is serious and that the overall situation is deteriorating. Afghans are frustrated by 8 years with not a lot of progress. There is still insecurity; the Taliban are gaining strength; Afghan security forces cannot offer the required protection to the people; governance is still bad; corruption is rampant.
2. The problem is not only a resilient and growing insurgency; there is also a crisis of confidence among Afghans – in both their government and the international community which undermines Karzai's credibility and emboldens the insurgents.

---

\* COMISAF'S INITIAL ASSESSMENT, dated 30 August 2009. Unclassified version from *Washington Post* website - [http://media.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/documents/Assessment\\_Redacted\\_092109.pdf?sid=ST2009092003140](http://media.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/documents/Assessment_Redacted_092109.pdf?sid=ST2009092003140)

## **EMBARGOED UNTIL THURSDAY, 22 OCTOBER 2009**

3. The insurgency must be confronted and its momentum reversed within 12 months. Any perception that our resolve is uncertain understandably makes Afghans more reluctant to oppose the insurgents.
4. The center of gravity of the Taliban is the inability to provide for the needs of the population “by, with, and through the Afghan government.” The insurgency can only be defeated by an Afghan solution. There must be a capable and accepted government with the requisite indigenous security forces that inspire confidence and support. There must be a system of government and a security force whose composition and organization recognizes and reflects the on-the-ground Afghan reality. Tribal, ethnic, and regional authorities and organizations can and must be the building blocks of a stable Afghan polity and state.
5. Success demands a comprehensive counterinsurgency (COIN) campaign that: results in the Afghan people’s confidence in their government; builds capable and appropriate Afghan security forces; and commits resources to protect the most vulnerable populations.
6. The U.S. and NATO/UN international effort in Afghanistan has been under-resourced. The threat has increased to the point that the current level of resourcing is inadequate to address it. There needs to be an increase in total coalition military and civilian end-strength. There is currently an unacceptable level of risk.

General McChrystal’s report makes it clear that he understood that the President’s new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan called for an extensive counterinsurgency campaign and operations. His conclusions and recommendations in his report to CENTCOM echo the statements and declaration of intent that he made to the Senate prior to his confirmation as the commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan. They should not have come as a surprise to the Administration and those involved in the development of the President’s strategy.

### **CONCLUSION**

As the Administration and the Congress consider policy options in the closely linked struggles in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the strategy that was so clearly articulated by President Obama in March must now apparently be reassessed. Questions that the Congress should ask are:

- Have the conditions changed so significantly in the past six months that the strategic goals enunciated by the President are now unattainable?
- Should we conclude that a return to power in Afghanistan by the Taliban will result in the reestablishment of a safe-haven for Al Qaeda and dangerous threats to Americans?
- Can a sustained and appropriately resourced civil-military counterinsurgency campaign with strong economic and political components establish a resilient, self-sufficient Afghan polity over the long-term?
- Are the Administration and the Congress prepared to make the case to the American people that such a long-term strategy is fundamentally in the national interest?

The level of resources recommended by General McChrystal are achievable by our national security budget. Presently, we spend about three times as much in military operations in Iraq as we do in Afghanistan (the Administration’s FY ’09 supplemental requested \$684B for Iraq and \$223B for

**EMBARGOED UNTIL THURSDAY, 22 OCTOBER 2009**

Afghanistan). As the drawdown of military forces in Iraq does (and should) accelerate, there will be sufficient manpower and resources to support requirements in Afghanistan.

Since the signing by Egypt and Israel of the 1978 Camp David peace accords, Egypt has received approximately \$60 billion in military and economic assistance from the United States -- and an international military peace-keeping force has been maintained in the Sinai. This is probably the level of international assistance that will be required by Afghanistan over the next ten years to establish a sustainable national security (military and police) capability sufficient to protect the nation against insurgents and terrorists. The economic impact of the 9/11 attacks launched by Afghanistan-based terrorists have been estimated to be more than \$80B.\* The level of additional resources General McChrystal proposes to avert the reestablishment of Taliban supported terrorist capabilities in Afghanistan is prudent insurance for US national security.

The questions that Congress must pose to the Administration include: what will it take to build a viable state in Afghanistan, an enormous, land-locked nation of 32 million people? Are we prepared to make the ten-year commitment required to create an operative Afghan state?

Those who are surprised by the end result of General McChrystal's analysis should understand that the lines of action described by him flow logically from the assumptions and conclusions that comprise the President's strategy. In my view, clearly the President must either support his new commander or change the Administration's strategic goals.

General McChrystal's plan outlines and justifies what it will take to operationalize the President's strategy. There are no real surprises in the commander's report. If the commander-in-chief truly intended to conduct a counterinsurgency campaign in Afghanistan, this is what it will take to do so.

*General McCaffrey currently serves as an adjunct professor of international affairs at West Point. He previously served as U.S. drug czar from 1996 to 2001 and prior to that as Commander, United States Southern Command from 1994 to 1996. He served four combat tours and was wounded in action three times.*

---

\* GAO-02-700R Impact of Terrorist Attacks on the World Trade Center, May 2002