

Joint Statement of
Christopher Shays and Michael Thibault, Co-Chairs
The Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan

Hearing:
**Contractor Training of
Afghan National Security Forces**

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[As prepared for delivery.]

Good morning. I am Christopher Shays, co-chairman of the Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan. Thank you for attending this hearing on Contractor Training of Afghan National Security Forces.

This opening statement is made on behalf of Co-Chairman Michael Thibault, our fellow Commissioners, and myself. The other Commissioners at the dais today are - .

Our hearing could not be more timely. Eight years after entering Afghanistan to overthrow the Taliban regime that had sheltered al Qaeda terrorists, the United States has about 70,000 troops in the country. The President has decided, after consulting with military leaders, to send another 30,000 Americans there.

We want to note, with respect and gratitude, that the men and women of America's armed forces have paid a heavy price for their service in Iraq and Afghanistan. As of December 17th, the fatality count since the start of U.S. combat operations in Southwest Asia stood at 5,287, with 931 of the deaths occurring in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, more than 40 other countries operating under United Nations authority -the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, France, Poland, Australia, and others - have over 30,000 troops in Afghanistan and have suffered casualties as well.

By the end of 2010, therefore, there will be more than 130,000 U.S. and allied military personnel in Afghanistan. As of September 2009, there were 104,000 contractor employees working for the Department of Defense in Afghanistan. The Congressional Research Service estimated just this week that the troop surge in Afghanistan could raise the number of DoD contractors working there to between 130,000 and 160,000. We would note that those numbers, striking as they are, do not include thousands of Department of State and Agency for International Development contractors in Afghanistan. Conservatively speaking, then, the total warfighter and contractor workforce in that country will likely exceed 300,000 by the end of 2010.

The UN-sanctioned military presence in Afghanistan is large and growing, but we must note the challenge there is also large and becoming more acute. Afghanistan is nearly the size of Texas, but is mostly mountainous and subject to brutal extremes of weather. The Afghan population is estimated at 29 million. They are mostly rural, mostly poor, and mostly illiterate. These conditions, and a mounting insurgency, pose great challenges to military operations, as well as to the governmental, non-governmental, and contractor organizations that provide security, reconstruction, logistical, and humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan.

It is safe to say none of the countries assisting Afghanistan in its struggle against hard-line insurgents and terrorists wants to have a long-term military presence there. Certainly the United States does not. That is why building well-trained, well-led, honest, and law-abiding national security forces in Afghanistan is a vital mission.

That mission is daunting. Afghanistan's military was severely degraded during the Soviet occupation and the civil war that led to the Taliban regime. Today the beleaguered Afghan National Army numbers about 105,000 - about half the size of Iraq's army, even though the two countries' populations are nearly equal. The Afghan National Police and Border Police have their own problems. The Congressional Research Service said in an August report the Afghan National Police are "riddled with corruption" and short of equipment - and no one could argue with that.

In September, the Washington Post published a confidential "commander's summary" from General Stanley McChrystal, the top U.S. and NATO commander in Afghanistan, that depicted broader problems. The general wrote of "the weakness of state institutions, malign actions of power brokers, widespread corruption and abuse of power by various officials," as well as errors by the international forces.

Despite all these challenges, the United States and other countries with a presence in Afghanistan are working to promote a stable and more democratic Afghanistan while preventing al Qaeda or other terrorists from resuming operations from havens in the country. From that perspective, training the Afghan National Security Forces is the ball game. Regardless of the issues under debate, the end game must be creating self-

sufficient Afghan army, national police, and border police forces that are free from corruption and able to provide adequate security.

From Fiscal Year 2002 through FY 2010, the U.S. Department of Defense will have spent nearly \$30 billion on training, equipping, and supporting the Afghan National Security Forces. As a point of reference, this effort is exceeded only by the theater-wide LOGCAP logistics-support program. This Commission does not want a program of this size, with its various contracts, to get mired in the same welter of problems that the Commission has documented in LOGCAP.

Meanwhile, the U.S. State Department's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement has obligated more than a billion dollars for counter-narcotics and basic police training.

Unfortunately, as the Government Accountability Office reported last month, "Afghanistan's security situation has deteriorated significantly since 2005, affecting all aspects of U.S. and allied reconstruction operations." Increased insurgent activity, combined with weaknesses in Afghan national security forces, has caused delay or abandonment of some reconstruction projects, disrupted already-tenuous supply lines, undermined anti-narcotics programs, and hindered training of Afghan government forces.

All of these facts show the growing importance and the growing challenge of training effective Afghan army and police personnel. The Department of Defense is committing the 4th Brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division, a company of military police, and the 48th Brigade Combat Team to the training effort, and will be taking over the national-police training mission from the Department of State.

But there aren't enough military trainers to do the training. Contractors like Xe, MPRI, and DynCorp play a significant role in the U.S. training effort in Afghanistan. And as we noted earlier, contractors' role is likely to grow as the buildup of Afghan army and police ranks continues.

Considering all of these facts, we need to ask:

- How well are the training contracts being drafted and awarded?
- How effective is contract management and oversight?
- How good are the results, particularly for key metrics like recruitment and retention?
- What mix of military and contract trainers is optimal?
- And, from a broader perspective, how appropriate is it to have armed-force training administered by contractors, however much military experience and instructional skill they may have?

These questions converge in large part on the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan, commonly called CSTC-A. CSTC-A works with the Afghan government and international forces and organizations to promote security and stability in Afghanistan. This includes managing a \$404 million contract to train and support Afghan national security forces.

To understand the critical role of CSTC-A in theater, this Commission has met with both its former commander, Lieutenant General Richard Formica, and its new commander, Lieutenant General William Caldwell, who also commands the new NATO Training Mission - Afghanistan. We are grateful for the cooperation provided by these fine officers.

Unfortunately, the July 30, 2009, report to Congress by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction said CSTC-A “does not have the capability to ensure that U.S. funds are managed effectively and spent wisely.” The SIGAR report, in which CSTC-A concurred, noted that the single contracting officer’s technical representative in country for the contract had limited experience and had been unable to make field visits to check performance. More resources have since been applied to this problem, but significant questions remain to discuss in this hearing -not only for CSTC-A and DoD, but also for the Department of State and for the holders of federal contracts.

We are fortunate to have the assistance of three panels of expert witnesses to help us assess the challenges of training Afghan security forces.

Our first panel has a single witness,

- Ambassador Kenneth Moorefield, Assistant Inspector General, Special Plans and Operations, Department of Defense.

The second panel has three witnesses:

- Major General Richard Formica, U.S. Army, former commander of Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan;
- David T. Johnson, Assistant Secretary of State, International Narcotics and Law Enforcement; and
- Michael Strain, Program Executive Officer, Counter Narcoterrorism Technology Program Office, Department of Defense.

Our third panel, offering a contractor perspective, also has three witnesses:

- Don Ryder, vice president, Civilian Police Programs, DynCorp International;
- Fred Roitz, executive vice president, Xe Company (formerly Blackwater); and
- Nick Nickerson, Program Manager, Afghan National Security Sector Development and Fielding Program, of the MPRI division of L-3 Communications.

Although the contractor panel is last on our schedule, contractors are not last in our thoughts. As a Member of Congress, I traveled to Iraq many times, and returned 10 days ago with other Commissioners from a trip to Afghanistan. We are all aware of issues and challenges in the U.S. contracting process, and have previously highlighted instances of waste, fraud, and abuse by some contractors.

But we have also observed that contractors supporting American military and reconstruction efforts in both Iraq and Afghanistan get high marks from our troops in the field – and that contractor employees include large numbers of experienced, hard-working, and patriotic Americans.

We have met contractors who have been in theater five years or more, providing continuity and institutional memory that is difficult to sustain in six-month or one-year deployments by U.S. military or civilian employees. We are aware that many contractor employees have died in support of the mission in Afghanistan. It is troubling, however, that no one can provide specific, reliable numbers to document the deaths and injuries these people have suffered. Let me say for the record that this Commission deeply respects the work and honors the sacrifices of government contractors, and appreciates hearing their views of the situation on the ground.

Today' s distinguished witnesses have been asked to summarize their testimony in 5 to 7 minutes in order to ensure adequate time for questions and answers. We also ask that witnesses submit responses within 15 business days to any questions for the record and any additional information they may offer to provide. The full texts of their written statements will be entered into the hearing record and posted on the Commission' s website.

On behalf of the Commission, we thank all of today' s witnesses for participating in what we view as a very important hearing. After the swearing in, we will begin by hearing from Ambassador Moorefield.

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