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DEPARTMENT DEFENSE BRIEFING

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REMARKS BY MICHELE FLOURNOY, UNDERSECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR POLICY;

SUBJECT: A NEW AFGHANISTAN STRATEGY;

LOCATION: AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

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MS. FLOURNOY: Thank you to all of you who turned out to talk about Afghanistan before your first cup of morning coffee.

I'm going to focus my comments this morning on the Afghan dimensions of our strategy, although we're happy to talk about the Pakistan elements of the strategy as well during the Q&A. I think everybody here already has a pretty good sense of the contours of our refined Afghanistan strategy, but let me just briefly emphasize a few issues before I turn this over to my colleagues. First, the process. The process through which we refined the strategy was really designed to do full justice to the incredible complexity of the challenges that we face in Afghanistan and to make sure that every perspective and every option received careful consideration. I know that there are those who would have liked to have seen a more rapid strategy review, but the president felt strongly that with so many lives and so many long-term security interests at stake, doing this fast was not as important as doing it right.

Our review process involved 10 meetings of the full national security team plus many, many smaller meetings. It was highly collaborative. General McChrystal's assessment was a crucial input into the process. The president also got analysis from and recommendations from other advisers both within and outside the United States government, as well as in talks with allied and partner governments.

The review process was also extremely disciplined. We started by making sure that we understood the relationship between al Qaeda, the Taliban and other extremist groups in the region, that we were in agreement about the fundamental U.S. interests at stake. We then focused on making sure we'd properly defined our objectives in the broader region, both in Pakistan and

in Afghanistan. And only then did we turn to focus on questions of strategy -- the how -- and then resources -- the means.

I say all this just to emphasize that the decision that the president made was made with great care and deliberation. While there's certainly no silver bullet here, we do feel confident that our refined strategy developed in this process is most likely to lead to success and that it is the one that best balances the risks involved.

So let me shift now to talk a little bit about the substance of the president's decision. Again, you already all know the basics: 30,000 additional U.S. troops deployed, the majority of which will be deployed by the end of the summer 2010, plus a call for NATO and ISAF partners to produce an additional 7,000 troops, which last week we hit that target and we expect additional allied troops to be promised in the weeks ahead.

We will be focusing on accelerating the quality and growth of the Afghan national security forces, both army and police, with an emphasis on creating a force that is both effective and sustainable.

We will also be tailoring our civilian assistance to increase government capacity and economic opportunity in a very carefully calibrated way. And we have ensured our Afghan partners that our engagement and our assistance will be enduring.

We will not walk away from Afghanistan when the military mission ends. I'm going to repeat that, because this is a message that some have not heard. We will not walk away from Afghanistan when the combat mission ends.

I want to highlight both what is the same here and what's different in our process. First, what's the same? What's unchanged? First and foremost, it's our commitment to our core goal in the region which remains to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al Qaeda and its extremist allies, to deny them safe haven in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

But here's what's different. First, although our refined strategy was shaped by the review we did last March, the process we've gone through in the past three months has helped us sharpen our focus significantly. We now have a much more focused approach to achieving a very clear and concrete set of objectives.

Second, our refined strategy calls for a much more rapid deployment of additional U.S. and international troops focused on reversing the Taliban's momentum and accelerating the growth of the ANSF.

And third, we are strongly committed to supporting Afghanistan and Pakistan over the long haul. But the active involvement of U.S. combat troops in Afghanistan is not open-ended.

Our refined strategy emphasizes a gradual transfer of responsibility for security to the Afghan government. That is something that all of the Afghan people want to see happen. And that process would begin in the summer of 2011.

So let me say a little bit more about each of these elements. To start with, when I say that our strategy has greater focus, I mean that we are being much more concrete and specific about what we are going to try to do and what we are not going to try to do.

As Secretary Gates said in his testimony last week, it is neither necessary nor feasible to create a modern, centralized, Western-style Afghan nation-state. Nor does our strategy entail conducting textbook counterinsurgency from one end of the country to the other.

It is instead a narrower focus tied more tightly to our core goal of disrupting, dismantling and eventually defeating al Qaeda, by building the capacity of the Afghans, capacity that will be measured by observable progress on clear objectives and not simply by the passage of time. So what we aim to do is to degrade the Taliban-led insurgency while building sufficient Afghan capacity to secure and govern the country. You've all heard the phrase clear, hold and build. You might say that the overall theme as we work toward these focused objectives, in Afghanistan, is clear, hold, build and transfer.

And this has a number of implications for our military mission, which now centers on six core operational objectives: The first of these is reverse the Taliban momentum -- this was front and center in General McChrystal's assessment; second, deny the Taliban access to and control over population and production centers, and key lines of communication; third, disrupt the Taliban outside of secured areas and prevent al Qaeda from regaining sanctuary; fourth, degrade Taliban capabilities to a level that the ANSF, eventually on its own, can effectively deal with them; fifth, increase the size and capability of ANSF while leveraging local security forces so that by the summer of 2011 we can begin the process of transitioning responsibility to security to the Afghan government; and six, selectively build up the Afghan government -- the capacity of the Afghan government -- and for the Department of Defense, this will be particularly focused on the ministries of defense and ministry of interior.

The president's decision on how many additional troops would be required grew out of these more-focused objectives, which brings me to my next key point. Our strategy will get the necessary additional troops faster to the places where greatest -- there's greatest need. Instead of deploying brigades gradually over a fairly extended period of time, we will seek to deploy the majority of the 30,000 additional troops, and 7,000 or more additional allied troops, by the end of August 2010.

For those of you who have visited Afghanistan, this -- you understand that this will be no small challenge, given the lack of developed infrastructure in and around the country. But this rapid inflow of additional U.S. combat forces is absolutely critical to reversing the Taliban momentum in short order.

And I also want to be clear that we have given -- the president has given General McChrystal complete flexibility on the force mix and the geographic deployment of those 30,000 additional troops. We feel confident that these troops, plus those being provided by allied -- allies, will get us where we need to be, but the president has also given Secretary of Defense Gates some limited flexibility to add critical enablers when force protection and emergent needs require. One final point. Our military mission in Afghanistan will not be open-ended. We currently plan

to maintain the additional troop strength in Afghanistan for about 18 months. At that point, U.S. forces will begin transferring lead responsibility for security to the ANSF.

And here again, I want to be very clear. Some critics have interpreted this as meaning that we're going to begin withdrawing all of our combat troops in July of 2011. Others have somehow managed to draw the opposite conclusion, that the 18-month time frame is absolutely meaningless and that all 30,000 additional troops will remain in country indefinitely.

But both of these interpretations are wrong. As Secretary Gates said in his testimony last week, July 2011 will be the beginning of a process, an inflection point of transition where Afghan forces assume greater responsibility for security. The pace and character of the drawdown, which districts and provinces will be turned over when, will be determined by conditions on the ground. I want to emphasize that the president didn't pick this date out of a hat. It's not arbitrary. During the strategy review, we went through a district-by-district analysis with team in the field, looking at conditions on the ground across Afghanistan, and also looking at both the current and projected capacity of the ANSF.

And the conclusion we reached based on that analysis is that July 2011 is a realistic date for us to plan to begin the process of transferring responsibility in some parts of the country. We have very high confidence that by that date, conditions will permit us to end the surge and begin a gradual and responsible drawdown of U.S. forces.

To be sure, we will likely be able to turn over responsibility for security more rapidly and more fully in some districts than others. Based on the assessment of conditions on the ground, the president will determine and adjust the scope and pace of the drawdown.

As Secretary Gates has said many times now, this is an issue of balance. We need to show both our partners and our adversaries in the region that we mean business. We will deploy the troops and the civilian resources that we believe are necessary to accomplish our strategic goals, and we will retain the tactical flexibility to adapt as circumstances require.

At the same time, we have to send a clear message to the Afghan people that the U.S. military is not a force of occupation, that we are not going to be there forever. Afghans want to take primary responsibility for defending their own country -- own country, and we will work with them to reach that goal -- realize that goal with a great sense of purpose and urgency.

There's much more I could say, but given our time, I want to turn over the mike to my colleagues. And I look forward to your questions during the Q&A. Let me turn it over to Paul. Thank you.

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