Dereliction of Duty II:

Senior Military Leaders' Loss of Integrity Wounds Afghan War Effort

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Senior ranking US military leaders have so distorted the truth when communicating with the US Congress and American people in regards to conditions on the ground in Afghanistan that the truth has become unrecognizable. This deception has damaged America's credibility among both our allies and enemies, severely limiting our ability to reach a political solution to the war in Afghanistan. It has likely cost American taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars Congress might not otherwise have appropriated had it known the truth, and our senior leaders' behavior has almost certainly extended the duration of this war. The single greatest penalty our Nation has suffered, however, has been that we have lost the blood, limbs and lives of tens of thousands of American Service Members with little to no gain to our country as a consequence of this deception.

Introduction

These are surely serious charges and anyone who would make such claims had better have considerable and substantive evidence to back it up. Regrettably, far too much evidence does exist and I will here provide key elements of it. As I will explain in the following pages I have personally observed or physically participated in programs for at least the last 15 years in which the Army's senior leaders have either "stretched the truth" or knowingly deceived the US Congress and American public. What I witnessed in my most recently concluded 12 month deployment to Afghanistan has seen that deception reach an intolerable low. I will provide a very brief summary of the open source information that would allow any American citizen to verify these claims. But if the public had access to these *classified* reports they would see the dramatic gulf between what is often said in public by our senior leaders and what is actually true behind the scenes. It would be illegal for me to discuss, use, or cite classified material in an open venue and thus I will not do so; I am no WikiLeaks guy Part II.

Fortunately, there is a provision that allows me to legally submit a classified report to Members of Congress. In conjunction with this public study I have also submitted classified reports to a number of US Representatives and Senators, both Democrats and Republicans. As the duly elected representatives of our people, they are authorized to see the classified data and empowered to do something about it. For the sake of so many who have paid with their blood – and the sake of those Service Members who have not yet had to pay that price – it is my sincere hope that Congress acts to resolve these issues expeditiously.

In the first section below I will demonstrate how numerous military senior leaders have used omission and outright deception in order to prevent the American public from knowing the truth in regards to the genuine conditions on the ground in Afghanistan. I will explain that there has been a significant volume of information available from numerous and reputable open sources that should have been effective in communicating to the American public the truth of the

situation. Owing to numerous factors (the key of which are discussed in detail in subsequent sections of the report), however, the powerful and pervasive personalities of several US general officers have been surprisingly effective at convincing even highly educated Americans to believe what the generals say and not what their eyes and evidence tell them.

In the second section I will help the reader gain a better understanding of how the situation described in Section I came to be. For the most part restricting myself to discussing situations in which I was physically a participant, I will first present a number of facts – many of which will be seen in public for the first time – regarding how Army senior leaders have been deceiving the US Congress and American people on some key modernization programs going back to the 1990s. In this section you will see how despite year after year of Government Accountability Office (GAO) analysis done explicitly for the US Congress which showed major and repeating failures in the Future Combat Systems (FCS), the Army's senior leaders instead told Members of Congress and the US public in press releases that the opposite was true; because Americans have trusted the Army's leaders more than any other in the country, they accepted the word of the generals and ignored the GAO reports and the physical absence of successful products.

A second major sub-element to this section will be a demonstration – also containing significant new information that has never been seen by the American people – revealing that what virtually the entire country and even a great percentage of our uniformed Service Members believe about how and why the Iraq surge of 2007 was successful, was in fact grossly inaccurate. The version of events that depicted the lion's share of the causality going to superior US generalship and the adoption of the "protect the population" strategy was created and sustained by a number of key senior US generals. When the full facts are examined, however, it becomes very clear that the surge of troops in 2007 was *instrumental* at best and according to one senior ground commander who led much of our fight in the Anbar province, "75% to 80% of the credit" for the surge's success lies elsewhere.

The inaccurate assigning of the reason for the 2007 Iraq surge's success has profound implications for our current war in Afghanistan and doubly so for the surge forces ordered by the President in late 2009. Had the President known the truth of what really happened in 2007 Iraq it is a virtual certainty he would not have made the decision he did in November/December 2009. In any case, the situation demonstrates a growing and expanding willingness on the part of our country's senior military leaders to use "Information Operations" even on domestic audiences to manipulate the system in order to get what they want.

As the last section demonstrates, the senior military leaders have been remarkably successful in achieving their desires; but as a result, our country has squandered almost a full decade in which it might have made noteworthy advancements in its force structure, has continued pursuing a military strategy that has proven to be an abysmal failure during a time when effective outcomes might have been found, and worst of all, has cost the lives and limbs of tens of thousands of American Service Members – and reportedly deprived hundreds of thousands more of their psychological and emotional well-being.

Section III will cover a broad range of negative consequences that our country has paid and will continue to pay until changes are made. We've lost credibility with our allies and friends in the

region; we've lost almost all credibility among even the Afghan population and individual government officials; and our word has no value among our enemies. Many may be tempted to believe it unimportant what our enemies think, but it is almost as important as it is for us to have our closest allies believe in us: at some point this war will have to end in a political settlement of some sort. If our enemy isn't able to believe the word of our country, we may never find a foundation upon which to reach an agreeable accord to end the war on terms acceptable to us.

Finally I will lay out a few recommendations on a way forward to address these deficiencies. There is a bit of good news to be had, however. While there are a number of general officers and senior leaders who have not dealt honorably with the American people, there are a great many others who have. As I note in the body of this report, the vast majority of the Soldiers and Marines I've met and personally observed in action are among some of the most remarkable, talented, and dedicated men and women I've ever met. Further, there are also some general officers in our Army who are dedicated to the nation and still have their integrity fully intact. For example the new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey, by all accounts, is a man of strict adherence to honor and integrity.

In order for the current crop of excellent junior Army leaders to become the next generations' senior Army leaders – and continue to demonstrate the same adherence to honor and integrity – changes must be made and made quickly of today's senior cohort. I've lost count of the number of truly promising and intelligent leaders who have gotten out of the service at the mid-level because they could not stomach the mendacity at the top. If we can change the culture at the top, however, the future for our Armed Forces and our country can once again be very bright.

Why Should You Listen to Me?

I am a Lieutenant-Colonel in the United States Army, serving as a Regular Army officer in the Armor Branch. I have just completed the fourth combat deployment of my career (Desert Storm, Afghanistan in 2005-06, Iraq in 2008-09, and Afghanistan again in 2010-11). In the middle of my career I served eight years in the US Army Reserve and held a number of civilian jobs, one of which was an aide for US Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (Legislative Correspondent for Defense and Foreign Affairs). This report does not constitute a comprehensive investigation into the corrupt nature of the senior ranks, but rather will be limited to the programs and combat tours in which I have personally engaged since 1997. Though the number is limited, the assignments I have had have placed me in arguably the most significant Army programs of the past 15 years.

During my most recent Afghan deployment my duties required that I travel extensively throughout Regional Command (RC) - North, RC-East, and RC-South, covering 9,178 miles. I conducted mounted and dismounted combat patrols with our troopers, travelling at various times in MRAP vehicles, MRAP All-Terrain Vehicles, and Strykers. I spent time with both conventional forces and Special Forces troops. While on dismounted patrol I once stepped on an IED that we discovered and somehow did not detonate; was in an MRAP patrol that was attacked with an IED (no one was injured); was twice on combat outposts attacked by Taliban dismounts; was rocketed and mortared more times than I could count, several times impacting so close my ears rang for hours afterwards.




LTC Daniel L. Davis on patrol in Khost Province and Kunar Province, 2011

Throughout this process I interviewed or had conversations with over 250 Soldiers from the lowest ranking 19-year old private, to sergeants and platoon leaders, company commanders, battalion commanders, brigade commanders, and Division commanders, as well as staff members at every echelon. In addition, I have had conversations with Afghan security officials, Afghan civilians, and a few village elders. I cite all the above not at all to boast about any personal accomplishments, but rather to convey that the conclusions and observations made throughout the remainder of this report are not made by an officer that was limited to one location, but one given a rare opportunity to see and participate in operations in almost every significant region of Afghanistan.

Section I: Into Afghanistan

In early 2009 International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) commander General David McKiernan was fired by the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff because they lost confidence in his ability to lead. General Stanley McChrystal was given McKiernan's command because – according to a 12 May 2009 Wall Street Journal news article – "Mr. Gates' decision to ask for Gen. McKiernan's resignation came after a behind-the-scenes campaign by an influential group of current and former military officers, many of whom played key roles developing and backing the Bush administration's troop 'surge' in Iraq." Along with General Petraeus (who was at this time the commander of CENTCOM), General McChrystal and his principle deputy General David Rodriguez were among the prime architects of the 2007 Iraq surge and were being expected to reprise their success in Afghanistan.

US Military leadership unambiguously sought to replicate the fundamentals that were believed to have succeeded so well in Iraq and importing them into Afghanistan. Prime among those fundamentals was to "Protect the population" which many still believe was primarily responsible for our success in 2007 Iraq. As will be thoroughly covered in a subsequent section of this report, however, that was never the case in Iraq and as we're about to thoroughly cover in the next section, it never worked in Afghanistan. What I hope to convey in this section is the lengths

to which our current military leadership seems to have gone to keep the façade of success alive despite the presence of considerable quantitative and qualitative evidence to the contrary.

Levels of Deception

Before retiring to become the Director of the CIA, General David H. Petraeus testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee on 15 March 2011 to provide Congress an update on the progress of the Afghan surge. A month later, the Department of Defense published its most recent assessment of the situation in Afghanistan. Both paint a very optimistic appraisal and give the unambiguous impression of success. Below is an excerpt of General Petraeus' opening statement followed by a key passage from the April 2011 DoD report. In his Opening Statement, the General said:

> As a bottom line up front, it is ISAF's assessment that the momentum achieved by the Taliban in Afghanistan since 2005 has been arrested in much of the country, and reversed in a number of important areas. However, while the security progress achieved over the past year is significant, it is also fragile and reversible. Moreover, it is clear that much difficult work lies ahead with our Afghan partners to solidify and expand our gains in the face of the expected Taliban spring offensive. Nonetheless, the hard-fought achievements in 2010 and early in 2011 have enabled the Joint Afghan-NATO Transition Board to recommend initiation this spring of transition to Afghanistan lead in several provinces. The achievements of the past year are also very important as I prepare to provide option and a recommendation to President Obama for commencement of the drawdown of the U.S. surge forces in July. Of note, as well, the progress achieved has put us on the right azimuth to accomplish the objective agreed upon at last November's Lisbon Summit, that of Afghan forces in the lead throughout the country by the end of 2014.



AP Photo of General David Petraeus testifying before Congress on March 15, 2011

The April 2011 DoD report said in its Executive Summary:

> Since the last *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and its Afghan partners have made tangible progress, arresting the insurgents' momentum in much of the country and reversing it in a number of important areas. The coalition's efforts have wrested major safe havens from the insurgents' control, disrupted their leadership networks, and removed many of the weapons caches and tactical supplies they left behind at the end of the previous fighting season. The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) continued to increase in quantity, quality, and capability, and have taken an ever-increasing role in security operations. Progress in governance and development was slower than security gains in this reporting period, but there were notable improvements nonetheless, particularly in the south and southwest. Over all, the progress across Afghanistan remains fragile and reversible, but the momentum generated over the last six months has established the necessary conditions for the commencement of the transition of security responsibilities to Afghan forces in seven areas this summer.

The following pages quantitatively demonstrate that much of the two public statements above are either misleading, significantly skewed or completely inaccurate. Also I'll demonstrate how this pattern of overt and substantive deception has become a hallmark of many of America's most senior military leaders in Afghanistan. As mentioned earlier in this report, were I able to share the classified reports the gulf between what some of our leaders have said in public and what they know behind the scenes would be dramatic. Nevertheless, even with what I'm about to provide from open source material the gulf will still be clearly evident. In the following sub-sections, I'll cover:

Deception at the Strategic Level

- o The Truth: (U) *Afghan NGO Safety Office* Q.4 2010 Report
- o The Truth: (U) Center for Strategic and International Studies, *"The Failures that Shaped Today's War"*, by Anthony Cordesman

Deception at the Operational/Tactical Level

- o Early 2011 Closing of the Pech Valley:
- o Statements of "Clear Progress" in Helmand Province

Deception against the American Public

- o Statements by Senior Uniformed Leaders from 2004-2010
- o Statements by General David Petraeus 2008-2011

Deception at the Strategic Level

Introduction

In this section I have endeavored to examine or discuss reports concerning large scale issues or information regarding regional matters, as opposed to anecdotal information. When the main pillar issues are examined - particularly over a number of years - it becomes very difficult indeed to maintain that anything short of a continual deterioration of our mission has occurred, and continues to deteriorate through today. Absent a significant changing of circumstances or strategy, the President's national security objectives in Afghanistan will not be accomplished.

Tactical Terms?

There are a number of terms that have been used by many senior leaders and pundits when talking to the American public in regards to combat actions in Afghanistan since 2009 that are being used in lieu of tactical terms. For example, the hallmark phrase used in determining success in this current Afghan fight is, "momentum." It is used as a tactical term much like we used "counter-attack" etc, but unlike the list of commonly understood list of tactical terms the US Army specifies in several Field Manuals, the meaning of "momentum" is in the eye of the beholder: you can neither prove nor disprove its existence.

For example, in the waning days of World War II, Germany launched its last gasp, final attempt to return to the offensive: Operation "Wacht am Rhein" - or the Battle of the Bulge, as we came to know it. The allies went on the defensive and employed a number of counter-attacks to break the German offensive momentum. Once accomplished, we would return to offensive action to try and win the war.

That was a measurable mission, and once accomplished, it would be an indisputable fact: either we stopped their westward attack or we didn't. In the Afghan COIN environment there is no such clarity. American Commanders can claim we have "halted their momentum" and who's to say otherwise? Omar Bradley couldn't have claimed he "halted the German offensive momentum" if there were still German tanks plowing deeper into the Ardennes. But in the case of a guerilla war there few identifiable actions that have unambiguous tactical meaning.

Another phrase commonly used by numerous ISAF officials to suggest that we've made progress is the equally undefinable "fragile and reversible. No matter what happens, no one can be pinned down: if it goes well, they cite the drop in insurgent capability as evidence they were right, but if it goes the other way, they have simply to say: "I told you this was fragile." The next one is a bit stranger.

Many ISAF leaders have since repeated this mantra on numerous occasions, variously explaining that since there are more US boots on the ground, there are more targets to hit, or alternatively, "when we take away his sanctuaries, he's going to fight back." But this is hard to support when one examines the physical evidence available.




(Davis Photo) Helicopters picking up troops in Kandahar, and Soldiers on patrol in Kandahar, 2011

As of May 2010 the US had more than 94,000 troops on the ground in Afghanistan. Thus, over the next year there were no more than 5 or 6% more troops deployed, yet the number of insurgent attacks, the number of IEDs (both found and detonated), the number of US wounded and US killed all continued to rise on a month-by-month comparison until this past summer – coincidentally when the number of US boots began to decline owing to redeployments.

Further, as was repeated with frequency during the first quarter of 2011 senior ISAF leaders have explained that we killed a significant number of insurgent (INS) leaders and foot soldiers, we took away his former sanctuaries, cut off his supply routes, took away his freedom of movement, discovered a huge number of weapons and ammo caches, and captured hundreds of insurgent fighters. But if these things are so, the expectation of yet another all-time record of violence warned by the leaders was illogical.

If I have tens of thousands of additional ISAF boots, and I kill hundreds of INS leaders thousands of his fighters, capture huge numbers of caches, take away his sanctuaries, and deny him freedom of movement, how could he then *significantly increase* his level of attacks as the Taliban did in the first half of 2011? By any rational calculation, our vastly increasing numbers combined with the enemy's dwindling pool of fighters and loss of equipment ought to have had precisely the opposite effect: they should have been capable of conducting considerably fewer attacks, emplacing a smaller number of IEDs, and their influence on the population should have been notably diminished. Yet none of those things came to pass.

ISAF leaders, nevertheless continue to make bold and confident statement after statement that we are succeeding, that the insurgency is weakening, and that the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GoIRA) is gaining the confidence of its people though they offer almost no tangible evidence to that effect, while explaining away the considerable volume or evidence which logically should cause one to reach a very different conclusion.

Ground Truth: *(U) Afghan NGO Safety Office Q.4 2010 Report*

The two unclassified sources I'm about to mention are remarkably accurate and line up precisely from what I observed throughout my 12 months in Afghanistan, during which I traveled over 9,000 miles throughout the country. The conclusions the authors of these reports reach -

especially given they have no personal stake in any particular strategy over another working - should be given attention.

The first was produced by the Afghanistan NGO Safety Office (ANSO) and signed by ANSO Director, Nic Lee, and examines the security situation in Afghanistan in order to inform the greater NGO community about the risks they face when operating there. According to the "ANSO Quarterly Data Report Q.4 2010, the ANSO characterized the insurgency as having fought "a significant campaign in 2010 expanding the total volume of attacks by 64%, the highest annual growth rate we have recorded, and securing new strongholds in the North, West, and East of the country. Their momentum would appear unaffected by US-led counterinsurgency measures. The campaign grew increasingly complex with reports suggesting the deployment of parallel governance structures including courts, judges and administrators." There was one other finding, however, on which the ANSO report was uniquely accurate.

Specifically addressing the insurgent performance and capability for violence, the report explains when taking the country as a whole into consideration, they consider their data as "indisputable evidence that conditions are deteriorating. If losses are taken in one area they are simply compensated for in another as has been the dynamic since this conflict started." But the most damning statement is this:

> More so than in previous years, information of this nature is sharply divergent from (International Military Forces) *'strategic communication' messages* suggesting improvements. We encourage (NGO personnel) to recognize that no matter how authoritative the source of any such claim, messages of the nature are solely intended to influence American and European public opinion ahead of the withdrawal, and are not intended to offer an accurate portrayal of the situation for those who live and work here.

There can be little doubt what the author meant in the above: he notes that since General Petraeus has been the commander, the 'strategic communication' message bears little resemblance to the truth, and that this distorted reality is more "sharply divergent" than "in previous years." From my personal experience over the past year, I can tell you this view is accurate. But it's not just the ANSO that comes to this conclusion. One of the more respected defense experts in the United States also notes the stark departure from the truth we've taken.

And that's not all. In the first half 2011, ANSO said…

Plus these notes about the UN report in summer 2011. they said… and ISAF retorted…

Ground Truth: *(U) Center for Strategic and International Studies, "The Failures that Shaped Today's War", by Anthony Cordesman*

As part one of a multi-part series on the situation in Afghanistan, Anthony Cordesman, on behalf of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), wrote in a February 15, 2011 article that ISAF and the US leadership failed to report accurately on the reality of the situation in Afghanistan and notes that, "since June 2010, the unclassified reporting the US does provide has steadily shrunk in content effectively "spinning" the road to victory by eliminating content that illustrates the full scale of the challenges ahead .. . " It is no coincidence that he specified June 2010 as the date the "spinning" began: General David Petraeus took command in June 2010.

Cordesman, however, explains that despite the dearth of truthful information, there are "some useful unclassified metrics in spite of the tendency to 'spin' and 'message control.' ... Even an overview of the strengths and weakness of unclassified metrics does, however provide considerable insight into both what is known about the war, and the many areas where meaningful reporting is lacking and the reporting available is deceptive and misleading. The US and its allies, and ISAF may currently be repeating the same kind of overall messaging as the 'follies' presented in Vietnam." Could there be a more damning comparison?

Here are some of the more noteworthy points Cordesman made in his presentation:

- US and ISAF won every major tactical clash, but lost much of the country;

- ISAF denied the scale of the insurgency and the seriousness of its rise. Issued intelligence and other reports claiming success that did not exist;

- The US and ISAF remained kinetic through 2009; the insurgent fought a battle of influence over the population and political attrition to drive out the US and ISAF from the start;

- In June 2010, the Acting Minister of Interior told the press that only 9 of Afghanistan's 364 districts were considered safe;

- No ISAF nation provides meaningful transparency and reporting to its legislature and people;

In the overview of his report, Cordesman wrote:

> The first report in this series of highlights some of the metrics that reflect a consistent failure to properly resource the Afghan campaign and to react to the growth of the Taliban, the al-Qaeda sanctuary in Pakistan, and the failure of the Afghan government. These failures were driven in party by the lack of unity and realism in ISAF… They also, however, were driven by political decisions to ignore or understate Taliban and insurgent gains from 2002 to 2009, to ignore the problems caused by weak and corrupt Afghan governance, to understate the risks posed by sanctuaries in Pakistan, and to "spin" the value of tactical ISAF victories while ignoring the steady grown of Taliban influence and control.

We'll see the points he made above as a recurring theme in the material that follows. What is critically important to consider is that Anthony Cordesman and the authors of the reports that follow aren't anti-American or a propaganda arm for the enemy; rather they are intensely interested in seeing the United States succeed and wholly in agreement with what we seek to accomplish.

But they are pointing out precisely the same situation that has prompted the writing of this report: our current military leadership is so distorting the information it releases that the deterioration of the situation and the failing nature of our efforts is shielded from the American public (and Congress), and replaced instead with explicit statements that all is going according to

plan. Not only is this type of behavior not representative of American values, it also works against our own interests.

In 2010 the violence in Afghanistan was dramatically higher than in 2009. The senior American leaders repeatedly explained that was so because the surge troops went into areas where no troops had been in the past and naturally the Taliban fought against them. But analysis of the situation they describe reveals some pretty significant problems with the logic.

On the surface, it certainly seems plausible: the enemy is in possession of location X; I am going to attack X in order to take it from him, thus, there will be an increase in fighting and casualties as a result. In the initial phase that certainly is logical and a spike in violence would reasonably be expected – but only after the initial entry.

For example, when we deployed thousands of Marines into Helmand for the first time in 2008, it was logical to assume that the number of violent acts would increase, as no one had been fighting in many of those areas before our arrival. But after the Marines established a presence and drove the Taliban out of their sanctuaries, there ought to have been a *reduction* in violence, not a continual, unbroken string of *increases.* I'll explain why in this generic example:

Prior to the arrival of ISAF Marine unit A there were already Y number of Taliban forces in a given area, and the number of violent acts/attacks prior to ISAF's arrival had been Z. Let's say we sent 2,000 Marines into the area and their number is now X +2,000 but the Taliban number Y remains constant. As the Marines conduct attacks against Y, logically the number of violent acts would rise. But after several months of sustained operations where X +2,000 continues a relentless onslaught against the insurgents, the Taliban casualties begin piling up by the hundreds. The Marines are equipped with every tool and technology known to war and they can replace 100% of their losses almost immediately. With the passing of time the Taliban strength and capability should begin a terminal decline as the superior number of US troops proves to be an irresistible force against the less-capable Taliban.



(Davis Photo) US troops fire 105mm howitzers at Taliban fighters in Kunar Province, 2011

As a means of explaining other reasons the Taliban ought to have been notably degraded in capacity, in numerous speeches during his 12 months in command of ISAF troops, General Petraeus often stated (as he did in his January 2011 letter to US troops) that since the arrival of US surge forces, ISAF has taken away Taliban strong holds, killed or captured hundreds of his senior and mid-level leaders; thousands of foot-soldiers have been removed from the battle field (killed or captured); ISAF has interdicted enemy lines of communication; discovered untold numbers of weapons and ammo caches, and beaten the enemy on battlefields throughout the country.

By any logic, then, since the number of ISAF troops never dropped throughout 2010 and ISAF leaders often reported the Afghan people were coming more and more to our side, then the number of enemy attacks, by any rational calculation, ought to have dropped throughout the second half of 2010, and to have done so precipitously by the summer of 2011, some 18 month after the surge began. But that is not what happened. In fact, as we'll see in the following sections despite the fact we had 94,000 to 100,000 American military personnel on the ground in Afghanistan from May 2010 through December 2011, the violence continued to rise *at almost the same rate it had risen since 2005 all the way through the summer of 2011* (and has leveled off in some places and seen slight drops in others, but remains well above 2009 levels).

Tactical Reporting

There are three key factors which must go our way in order to succeed in this war: 1. We must militarily degrade the insurgency to a sufficiently low level of capability that will enable the Afghan security forces to handle them alone; 2. The ANSF must concurrently be trained to a sufficiently high level they are able to handle the weakened insurgency; and 3. The GoIRA must

be minimally corrupt and sufficiently able to govern, providing a viable economy, secure environment, and a fair judiciary. It is reasonable to assume that if the American public came to believe that even after 10 years of effort we were no closer to success in attaining those three requirements than in 2007 or 2008 - even after two full years of a 30,000-person troop surge – support would almost certainly come into question.

While there is actually a considerable body of publicly available information to confirm that none of the three key requirements have developed to the level claimed, for various reasons the mainstream media does not press the issue and simply accepts the interpretation given in press releases and interviews like General Allan's to USA Today. When the American public hears flag officers provide sincerely conveyed explanations for what might appear to be a contradiction between the raw data and the explanation, the public has thus far always ignored their own misgivings and given the generals the benefit of the doubt (though some very recent evidence indicates that blanket acceptance might be on the wane).

In the sections that follow we will take a look at all three key areas: the standing of ANSF, status of GoIRA, and state of the insurgency. To present them I will contrast what our leaders have said in the media with numerous unclassified reports that accurately portray the truth on the ground. In many of these situations I will augment with my own observation, as in a number of cases I have personal experience in the same timeframe and on the ground in the area cited. These excerpts represent a considerable gulf between what is claimed and what is real.

1. The Status of the ANSF and General Caldwell

Cheryl Pellerin of the American Forces Press Service (AFPS) published an article on 14 October 2011 in which she reported about the progress and development made by the Afghan National Security Forces. She opened the article by writing, "Two years of intense education and training have turned members of the Afghan army and police into a national security force that is learning to protect and serve and that is producing a new breed of leaders, the NATO Training Mission commander (LTG William B. Caldwell) said yesterday."




(Davis Photos) Afghan century on guard and a police inspection in northern Afghanistan, 2011

General Caldwell is quoted throughout the remainder of the article making positive statement after positive statement, implying the army and police are making significant strides, which he ended by saying, "We really are starting to see a security force there that understands they are there to protect and serve and not to be served themselves… We realize that if we have the right leaders, we can take on any challenges that are out there. But leaders take time and effort to develop, so we've continued to build more capacity inside Afghanistan to train leaders."

In another AFPS article published on 26 September 2011, General Caldwell was quoted as saying the Afghan army and police had made "tremendous" progress and added, "Today, I can say the return on the investment that we're starting to see is pretty significant from these efforts made over the last two years..." Less than a month later he went further in his flattering description of the ANSF. In a 17 October 2011 ISAF press release, General Caldwell said, "I am amazed at the significant progress that the Afghan security forces have made over these last two years. It's been brought about because of tremendous partnerships that exist in the international community helping get at this very mission." Yet numerous publicly available reports quantitatively refute these many claims.

I can personally attest to seeing a large number of Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police, and Afghan Border Police personnel who were either unprofessional, unwilling to work, or in one celebrated case in the Zharay district of northern Kandahar Province, in league with the Taliban. In almost every combat outpost I visited this year, the troopers reported to me they had intercepted radio or other traffic between the ANSF and the local Taliban making essentially mini non-aggression deals with each other. General Caldwell, however, wasn't the only senior leader to hail the ANSF.

On March 15th, 2011 Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, Michele Flournoy along with General David Petraeus testified before Congress on the status of the war in Afghanistan. In her statement she said of the ANSF that the United States had "been able to improve their quality substantially by developing Afghan noncommissioned officers and trainers, expanding the training curriculum, adding literacy programs, increasing retention rates, and partnering Afghan units with ISAF forces in the field. As General Petraeus will describe in detail, US and ISAF forces fighting side-by-side with increasingly capable Afghan units throughout the country have wrested the initiative from the insurgents..."

During my 12 months in Afghanistan I travelled over 9,000 miles and saw or participated in both mounted and dismounted combat patrols in virtually every area US Army troops were engaged. Many of those were joint missions with ANSF forces. What I saw first-hand, in virtually every circumstance, was a barely functioning organization - often cooperating with the insurgent enemy - that was dramatically different than the progressing organization depicted by the Secretary in the March 2011 hearing. I share the following two vignettes as representative examples of what I saw all over Afghanistan.

As part of a visit I made to the men of 1st Squadron, 32nd Cavalry (1-32 CAV) in January 2011, I accompanied one of their patrols to the northern-most check point American forces go in Kunar Province, "Check Point Delta." There was an ANP station there which had reported being attacked by the Taliban two and a half hours prior to our arrival. Through the interpreter I asked the police captain (see photo below) where the attack had originated, and he pointed to the side of a near-by mountain. "What are your normal procedures in situations like these? Do you form up a patrol and go after them? Do you periodically send harassing patrols after them? What do you do?" As the interpreter conveyed my questions, the captain's head wheeled around abruptly to look at the interpreter and then shot a look back to me with an incredulous look on his face and *literally* laughed in my face, and said, "No! We don't go after them; that would be *dangerous!"*



Commander of the Afghan Border Police detachment in Kunar Province

This behavior on the part of the ANSF is quite common in this area. In June 2010, another battalion of the 101st, Task Force "No Slack", were going to fight a major battle against entrenched Taliban near the Marawara Valley in Kunar Province, near the Pakistan border. The plan was for a joint US/ANA battle force. According to the Washington Post which covered the vicious, days-long battle, the Taliban put up a bigger than expected fight – which caused the ANA to run on the first day, never to return. After the US had cleared out the valley, reportedly killing over 150 insurgent fighters, they built two combat outposts so the ANA could "hold" what we had just "cleared." Instead, they ran again.

I was able to run down one of the platoon leaders in TF No Slack who told me that after the June 2010 battle the Americans built two combat outposts for the ANA to set the ANA up for success to hold the valley. However, mere days after the US pulled it's last troops from the battlefield the Taliban started a "whisper campaign" among the locals saying they were going to come back and kill every ANA soldier they found upon their arrival. This mere rumor caused the entire

group to abandon the fighting position. Unfortunately, the story of the Marawara Valley was not yet over.

Only nine months later (March 2011), in order to "create space" for the transition for the unit that was to replace TF No Slack, the battalion was ordered to conduct a new attack in almost the same location (the Taliban had returned and re-entrenched themselves immediately after the ANA abandoned the site). This time, at least the ANA didn't run from the battle, but when the casualties were examined after the battle, the toll was: 25 Americans killed, wounded or injured (six killed), and six ANA killed, wounded or injured (two killed). It wasn't hard to figure out who did the bulk of the fighting. But because our confidence in the ANA was so low, this time we didn't even pretend to leave them there. Thus, we took the same ground twice, and now twice have given it back, as no one "held" after we "cleared." It goes without saying there has been no attempt to "build" or "transfer" - and the Taliban owns the valley today.

2. Out of the Pech

In late January 2011, I went to visit the 1st Squadron, 32d Cavalry Regiment (a unit of the famed 101st Airborne). Before arriving at the Squadron's headquarters I visited first at their parent headquarters, the 1st Brigade. While there I spent considerable time with many of the leaders of 1-32 CAV's parent unit who told me certain US outposts in the Pech Valley of northeastern Afghanistan were to be shut down in the coming months. Their rationale made sense: we were producing nothing of any strategic value by just occupying three large FOBs in this hostile valley.

They told me their Soldiers could perform brilliantly and heroically, win every engagement against the Taliban, but at the end of their year have made no difference. Instead, what they proposed to do was close down three bases in the valley, while holding onto the one at the mouth of the valley in order to deny giving the Taliban a free pass to other locations in Afghanistan. The only concern they had, I was told, concerned the ANSF: would they be able to hold if we left? "Heck no," one officer told me. "We really don't know what they'll do, but you and I both know they won't be able to handle that mission any time soon."



(Davis Photo) An American Soldier manning a defensive position in eastern Afghanistan, 2011

Even with that problem, it made sense from a tactical perspective. But instead of just telling the truth and defending it on the actual merits, ISAF applied spin to the story. In a Washington Post story that ran in February 2011, the official spokesman for ISAF was quoted as saying of the Pech shutdown, "Afghan security forces are able to take responsibility of the Pech Valley." NATO spokesman German Brigadier General Josef Blotz explained that in fact "this is testimony to our confidence" in the ANSF's ability to handle the job. A battalion executive officer of one of the ANSF units in that area, however, had a rather different view.

"According to my experience in the military and knowledge of the area, it's absolutely impractical for the Afghan National Army to protect the area without the Americans," a Major Turab, a former second-in-command of an Afghan battalion in the valley told the New York Times. "It will be a suicide mission." The misgivings of the Afghan soldier was not considered and the three bases were shut down or handed to the ANSF.

Several months later the Afghan forces in fact proved incapable of providing security against the insurgents in the Pech - just as Afghan Major Turab had predicted – and US officials made a decision to send American forces right back into the Pech Valley. But instead of simply admitting we'd made a mistake in pulling US forces out the first time, a 12 August 2011 Associated Press article reported, "The US military downplayed the decision to station troops again in Pech. The coalition, along with the Afghan National Army, always maintained a presence in the region, said Lt. Col. Chad Carroll, a spokesman for the coalitions ' eastern command. 'It's just a matter of where they laid their heads at night." That, of course, was blatantly untrue. We sent the US troops back in because the Afghan forces were completely

incapable of handling the job without US presence. We seem significantly challenged to tell the truth in almost any situation.

3. The Zharay Assessment

In June of 2011 I went to the Zharay district of Kandahar Province to visit units of the 3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division. During this trip I visited with staff officers from the Brigade at FOB Pasab, and a Battalion Commander and his Command Sergeant Major at COP Howz-e Madad. The following day I accompanied a platoon of Combat Company, 1-32 Infantry in a place called COP Nalgham, to a building complex that had just been cleared the night before. The mission was billed as a joint force of one US platoon and an ANA squad establishing a new strong point defensive position from the building complex. What I observed was polar opposite performance between the two units.



(Davis photo) Soldiers from 1-32 Infantry conducting combat operations in northern Kandahar Province

No one expects the ANA to perform anywhere near the level of a well-trained US force, but they are expected to put forth effort and show a willingness to learn. Instead, the US troopers had complete contempt for the ANA and it didn't take me long to figure out why. The complex was still seeded with an unknown number of IEDs in the area and known Taliban fighters in the buildings across the grape field. The temperature was 116-degrees. The American unit did exactly what they were supposed to: work to clear the area of IEDs, build machine gun positions,

and prepare defensive works throughout the complex. While the Americans worked regardless of the heat - four of whom suffered slight heat casualties - every ANA troop went to the shade of one room and never helped throughout the day I was there.

4. Tangi Valley and the Successful Transition

On 11 April 2011, US Army News Service published a report that celebrated the successful transitioning of a US combat outpost in the Tangi Valley (Wardak Province) to Afghan control. Officials said COP Tangi was to be returned because of successful military operations in the area and satisfactory development of ANSF forces. According to the article, the US battalion commander LTC Thomas Rickard said, "US forces will still patrol the area. We are going to continue to hunt insurgents in Tangi and prevent them from having a safe haven. As a result of Operation Tangi Smash, the Afghan police shut down a homemade explosives lab and seized nearly 24 kilograms of marijuana. The Afghan national police have already demonstrated their resolve by placing permanent check points at each end of the valley."

The article concluded by reporting, "ANSF will soon run COP Tangi, and TF Warrior (the US unit) will increase operations in Chak (a nearby area). If this trend continues, within a few years, local residents in Chak will be able to look solely toward other Afghans for security and guidance, said Rickard. With such a glowing assessment of the joint US/Afghan effort, one would naturally expect that the insurgents in this area had been seriously degraded. Yet as happened in the Pech Valley, US troops would later be sent back into the Tangi Valley because the ANSF proved unable to secure it without US troops to help. It was, in fact, a mission near the Tangi Valley that a US Chinook helicopter was shot down by the Taliban in August of last year.



(Davis Photo) US Chinook helicopter carrying US troops in central Afghanistan, 2010

In the next several sections I will make limited inclusions of specific statements made by senior officials because there are so many of them and they are so common, it is unnecessary to point them out. The general theme ISAF and US military leaders stress are: the Afghan government will be at least minimally capable by 2014 and is trending in that direction; the violence is waning in AFG specifically as a result of the surge; and the people recognize the way of the Taliban is a dead-end.

None of those characterizations are accurate.

Drifting Doctrine

For most people, it is quite simply irreconcilable with what we think we *know,* to seriously consider any senior military leader would intentionally tell the American public something that was untrue. In all probability our leaders do not consider what they are saying to be "lying" per se, but an effective part of "Information Operations (IO)" designed to *protect* the support of the American people for our troops in contact.

Evidence suggests our leaders genuinely believe eventually we will wear down the insurgents and if the generals just get a little more time, we'll succeed. If the American public were to know the truth, the thought goes, the people may "incorrectly" judge we aren't going to succeed and "prematurely" demand a withdrawal But as you'll discover in the sections that follow, available

evidence strongly indicates that the current military strategy we are using in an attempt to achieve the President's political objectives has a low probability of success.

The genesis of this evolving thought process goes back to Desert Storm and the praise given to "Storrnin' Norman" Schwarzkopf for how he handled the media during the first Iraq War. In the decade that followed and with the advancement in satellite communications, the military began to pay more attention to the role of media in conflicts and how it could be used to support operations. [Removed 2003 Roadmap citing making core concept equal to warfighting But the introduction further defines the purpose of the manual and presents a very new concept in the development of IO.

"IO becomes a core competency. The importance of dominating the information spectrum explains the objective of transforming IO into a core military competency on a par with air, ground, maritime and special operations." It is a remarkable development to suggest that using information in combat is on par with ground and air forces. Three years later the Department of Defense published an unclassified doctrinal manual that provided further clarity on Secretary Rumsfeld's information focus.

The 2006 edition of Joint Publication (JP) 3-13 *Information Operations,* proscribed the synthesis of several heretofore independent categories of information to Joint Forces. JP 3-13 explains that "IO are described as the *integrated employment* (emphasis mine) of electronic warfare (EW), computer network operations (CNO), psychological operations (PSYOP), military deception (MILDEC), and operations security (OPSEC), in concert with specified supporting and related capabilities, to influence, disrupt, corrupt or usurp adversarial human and automated decision making while protecting our own."

The manual also stipulates that an IO cell chief is responsible for ensuring that "IO planners are fully integrated into the planning and targeting process, assigning them to the joint targeting coordination board in order to ensure full integration with all other planning and execution efforts." Since it is so crucial for the Joint Force to "fully integrate" IO into every aspect of military operations, it is important to understand what some of these inputs specifically require. Two are of particular import: military deception and psychological operations.

Military Deception is defined as "(JP 3-14.3) being those actions executed to *deliberately mislead* adversary decision makers as to friendly military capabilities, intentions, and operations, thereby causing the adversary to take specific actions (or inactions) that will contribute to the accomplishment of the friendly mission" and PSYOP as "(JP3-53) planned operations to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence the emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals."

Each of these capabilities by itself is perfectly valid and has legitimate military application. But as we "fully integrate" each of these concepts into a single "10" cell chief, it becomes difficult not to blur the boundaries between them. Since Public Affairs is also closely associated with the IO cell - and is charged to "(JP 3-61) provide information to the media, to the commander, and to the supporting forces in near real time. The key to success ... (is) integrating PA operations into

all levels of the command" - the danger of overlap and outright confusion on roles and responsibilities - and limitations/prohibitions - becomes great. The results of this blurring were seen in the writings of some of the Army's senior Public Affairs officers in a 2006 compendium published by the US Army War College entitled, "Information as Power" What some of these senior officers wrote is both troubling and perhaps reflective of the current problems.

In an article written by Colonel Richard B. Leap *(Strategic Communication: An Imperative for the Global War on Terrorism Environment),* he endorses Public Affairs getting involved in more than their JP3-61 charter requires. He writes:

> Many PA practitioners believe their only role is to inform the domestic and international publics with accurate, truthful information and provide access to government and military officials and operations to confirm what is reported. All should agree that PA must always present truthful, credible information, however, if Public Diplomacy and open PSYOP only target foreign audiences, then who besides PA can counter the enemy's or the media's shaping of US domestic opinion? ... An April 2006 Pew Research Center poll sheds light on the effect media "framing" can have on domestic support - in April 2003, 61% of Americans felt the military effort in Iraq was going very well compared with only 13% in April2006. Public Affairs organizations must devise new means and methods to better "frame" issues for domestic and international audiences on policy successes while countering enemy disinformation in order to reverse these trends.
>
> Further, the US Government must clarify the roles, responsibilities, authorities and relationships between Public Affairs, Public Diplomacy and Information Operations to not only influence foreign target audiences, but to safeguard US national will. A failure to do so may result in strategic defeats in the future.

It seems not to have occurred to the Colonel that the drop in American public support as conveyed in the Pew poll might have had something to do with the actual deteriorating battlefield conditions and not a "failure" on the part of PA to accurately "frame" the matter. More troubling is the author's contention that a valid role for Public Affairs is to "frame" information in order to "safeguard US national will." Since he has just demonstrated that he didn't consider the failing military situation on the ground to be a valid reason for American public opinion to be low, what's to say the implication isn't that we can "frame" only the positive information while suppressing the negative - or to manufacture positive information if none exists.

Colonel Leap concludes his article by recommending several actions designed to strengthen "Military Information Operations." One of the most noteworthy: "It should specifically address all prior legislation beginning with the Smith-Mundt Act that is limiting the effectiveness of Information organizations in the GWOT environment. It should also specify acceptable activities that organizations may perform to protect a key friendly center of gravity, to wit US national will."

In case you aren't familiar with the Smith-Mundt Act, it established the US law that was amended in 1985 to specifically prohibit US organizations from using information "to influence public opinion in the United States." In context, Colonel Leap is implying we ought to change the law to enable Public Affairs officers to influence American public opinion when they deem it necessary to "protect a key friendly center of gravity, to wit US national will." In a more recent essay penned by a more senior officer, Brigadier General Ralph O. Baker, on the Pentagon’s

Joint Staff as the Director for Joint Force Development, seemed to agree with COL Leap in the July-August 2011 edition of *Military Review*. In an article entitled "Information Operations: From Good to Great," General Baker wrote:

> …competently managing information that affects the population's attitudes and beliefs is a decisive element of successful counterinsurgency. In US military doctrine, we refer to this effort as information operations (IO). Information operations are activities undertaken by military and nonmilitary organizations to shape the essential narrative of a conflict or situation and thus affect the attitudes and behaviors of the targeted audience.

General Baker further explained there were three main points for US military personnel to understand terms of IO: 1) that information operations are "a potentially decisive" component of their COIN strategy; 2) IO needs to be incorporated into "every facet of a unit's daily framework"; and 3) military commanders must ensure their "intended messages are driven home repetitively to the target audience." In explaining the third point, he wrote, "the most common mistake committed by units when executing information operations is the failure to achieve sufficient repetitious deliver of messages to their intended audiences. Repetition is a key tenet of IO execution, and the failure to constantly drive home a consistent message dilutes the impact on the target audiences."

As COL Leap never even considered the American public's support of the war might have been waning as a direct result of what was *physically happening on the battlefield*, General Baker likewise fails even to address in his article that the information operations – conceptually a perfectly legitimate and useful tool – *must* be tied strictly to *effective actions* on the ground. It is noteworthy that nowhere in the multi-page essay did the General address, even in passing, that the IO plan is worthless if it does not accurately support the actions and conditions on the ground. Instead, he emphasizes this to Army troops:

> For years, commercial advertisers have based their advertisement strategies on the premise that there is a positive correlation between the number of times a consumer is exposed to product advertisement and that consumer's inclination to sample the new product. The very same principle applies to how we influence our target audiences when we conduct COIN.

It is remarkable to consider that a senior ranking officer in the United States Army emphatically suggests that standard marketing strategies are the "very same" for combat operations, and yet it is also very telling. In explaining why a certain operation run by the 1st Armored Division was successful, he cited exclusively the actions the IO staff undertook, implying the actions of the combat troops had either little or no real impact on their success. General Baker wrote:

> After several months of hearing about ISF successes from personal conversations, seeing examples on billboards in the city, hearing of them on the radio stations, and seeing them on TV infomercials, we had a high level of confidence that our target audiences' belief system and attitudes were affected. Quite simply, they got the message that Iraqi Security Forces were competent and capable, and they began to act accordingly. It may sound easy, but that kind of success requires direct and persistent leader emphasis and involvement at all levels… I cannot overemphasize the importance of such "message saturation." Such repetition and constancy is a critical prerequisite to influencing a targeted audience.

Had the General included a throw-away line that "…in concert with our brave troops working with their ISF partners…" the concern wouldn't be so great. But from what he wrote above –

"*Quite simply, they got the message"* – it is clear the author genuinely believes that "selling" the idea that the Iraqi Security Forces were competent is what caused the people to "act accordingly." It wasn't the US line troops who did the fighting and training, and it wasn't the Iraqi forces who performed well. It was the IO staff who successfully sold the idea to the Iraqi people.

So whether it's COL Leap in his belief that US political will is won or lost only on how the message was presented to the American people, or General Baker's belief that the Iraqi people believed in their forces based on his staff's message saturation, the actions that occur or the ground truth in a given situation *literally* don't seem to enter the equation.

These aren't fringe leaders. General Baker is the Pentagon officer responsible for the Department of Defense's Joint Force Development (meaning Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines). His ideas carry significant weight with units in all branches of service as they train their troops and units for future combat. Is it any wonder, then, how our current cohorts of senior leaders are conducting Information Operations in Afghanistan? Based on the method of repetition of the same message they seem to be employing – that we are "on the right azimuth", that the ANSF is steadily improving, etc – they seem to agree with General Baker's philosophy, as the claims they repeatedly make in public have little to no correlation with actual events on the ground.

Media Failures

One of the key questions most readers must be asking about this point in the report, is how could such an extensive, pervasive, and long-running series of deceptive statements have gone unnoticed by virtually the entire country? There are a number of reasons, but perhaps none bigger than the role played by the major media in this country. This is not an issue where "the liberal media" of the major networks failed, or "the right-wing conservatives" of FOX News, nor any other specific network. Rather, it was a cumulative failure of our nation's major media in every category: network news, cable news, magazines and major newspapers.

America has long been proud of its open and free press, and we not infrequently boast about it to other countries around the world. The Society of Professional Journalists (which boasts thousands of members in the United States) has a code of ethics that requires its members follow. Key elements of that code include, "Members of the Society of Professional Journalists believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. The duty of the journalist is to further those ends by seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues. Conscientious journalists from all media and specialties strive to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty." If today's journalists believed that and actually acted on it, we would almost certainly have a more honest and accountable group of senior leaders. Based only on observed action, however, too few of today's journalists live their code.

The first point is also probably the most obvious: in today's world of major journalism, it's all about viewership ratings which directly drive the bottom line: advertising revenue. If CNN doesn't put more news shows on that draw larger audiences than FOX News, they've got to

adjust. One of the key permutations of this requirement comes in which reporters get the best, most accurate news and in the world of military and defense news, that means access to senior leaders, whether uniformed or civilian.

The military, of course, is well versed in this game and is keenly aware of the power that gives them. If reporter A does not cover a story the way senior military leader B desires, reporter A suddenly finds his access to B greatly reduced – or in some cases outright eliminated – even if A works for a major outlet. If reporter X shows he or she will routinely give the slant that is supportive of the IO outlined in the section above, military leader Z will not only find time for them, but will from time to time give them a scoop. Other times reporter Z will be invited to a VIP-level tour of certain locations on the battlefield, sometimes with a three-star general as an escort.

These are not hypothetical possibilities but occur frequently. Few reporters there are who finally get the access to the military's most senior leaders who will then risk it by writing or reporting something either controversial or that will cast the leader or his operations in an unflattering light. The code of ethics that suggests it is a journalist's duty to seek the truth while "providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues" seems to be less important than having access to top leaders. This assessment of today's major media and its relation to those in powerful positions was most recently exposed in the case of the Pentagon's Inspector General (DoDIG) and an investigation it conducted in regards to a charge the Department of Defense under the Bush Administration used former general officers to inappropriately influence the American public by means of providing "expert commentary" on major media news outlets.

The New York Times reported on Christmas Day 2011 that after the DoDIG completed its two year investigation, they found the Pentagon complied "with Defense Department regulations and directives." Given that finding, one would naturally expect to read in the details of the report that the alleged wrong-doing never happened. Curiously, the report noted quite a number of episodes which would seem to indicate problems. According to the Times article, the report found:

- The inspector general's investigation grappled with the question of whether the outreach constituted an earnest effort to inform the public or an improper campaign of news media manipulation. The inquiry confirmed that Mr. Rumsfeld's staff frequently provided military analysts with talking points before their network appearances.

- Given the conflicting accounts, the inspector general's office scrutinized some 25,000 pages of documents related to the program. But except for one "unsigned, undated, draft memorandum," investigators could not find any documents that described the strategy or objective of the program.

- In some cases, the report said, military analysts "requested talking points on specific topics or issues." One military analyst described the talking points as "bullet points given for a political purpose."

- Another military analyst, the report said, told investigators that the outreach program's intent "was to move everyone's mouth on TV as a sock puppet."

- According to the report, four military analysts reported that they were ejected from Mr. Rumsfeld's outreach program "because they were critical" of the Pentagon.

- One former Pentagon official told the investigators that when Barry McCaffrey, a retired four-star Army general and NBC military analyst, "started challenging" Mr. Rumsfeld on air, he was told that Mr. Rumsfeld wanted him "immediately" removed from the invitation list because General McCaffrey was no longer considered a "team player."

- (Retired Army General Wesley) Clark told investigators that CNN officials made him feel as if he was less valued as a commentator because "he wasn't trusted by the Pentagon." At one point, he said, a CNN official told him that the White House had asked CNN to "release you from your contract as a commentator."

- The report, however, said that these analysts may have gained "many other tangible and intangible benefits" from their special access. (Eight analysts said they believed their participation gave them better access to top Defense Department officials, for example.)

To sum the above: the Secretary of Defense gave "talking points" to former generals to use when they went on television news shows to sell Mr. Rumsfeld's views; no documentation even existed – among 25,000 documents – to even confirm what the purpose of the Secretary's program was; talking points had a political purpose; when even two well-known former generals – McCaffrey and Clark – didn't move their mouth "like a sock puppet", they were dropped from the program. CNN demonstrated its proclivity to only want spokesmen with current access when they allegedly tried to drop General Clark. Does anyone see a problem with this?

A Pentagon media outreach program – ostensibly to "educate" the public – only uses spokesmen who are willing to speak the bullet points provided by the Secretary of Defense, and if those spokesmen don't act as "team players" and say what the Pentagon wants, they are dropped. For their part, the networks only want men and women to speak as experts if they have that top-level access. All of this begs the question: what sort of objectivity and honest analysis did the American public get from watching the major media outlets during this period?

And equally as troubling: with the small number of excerpts provided by the DoDIG's final report I cited above – all of which reveal questionable practices and clearly indicate the Pentagon's senior leaders were unapologetically attempting to get their message (and *only* their message) spread on the news – the Pentagon's watchdog investigative arm finds the program "complied with regulations and directives." Meaning, we can be sure that such practices will continue without interruption.

Thus, the American people can expect that in future situations where military expert opinion is desired by major news media outlets, the main group of spokesmen who the networks will hire are those with access to top defense officials – and the Pentagon is only going to give access to those willing to share as their "opinions" the bullet points given them by the Department of Defense.

So long as our country's top TV and print media continue to avoid challenging power for fear of losing access, there is every reason to expect many senior Defense Department leaders will continue to play this game of denial of access in order to effect compliant reports. As I've

shown throughout this report, there is ample open source information and reports all over the internet that would allow any individual – or reporter – to find the truth and report it. But heretofore few have.

As I note later in this report that there are a number of high ranking generals in the military today who are brilliant leaders and have the highest standards and integrity (giving me *hope* that there is a chance of reform in the future), so too there are some really fine journalists in both print and on-air media organizations. We need more experienced and honorable journos – and their parent organizations – to summon the courage to report wherever the truth leads and not simply regurgitate the bullet points handed out by some action officer. America needs you!

Casualty Figures

The number of total US casualties had risen to its highest rate of the war in October 2011, despite the infusion of 30,000 additional Soldiers 18 months ago. From 1 January 2010 to 30 September 2010, we suffered a total of 4,155 casualties (363 killed and 3,792 wounded). From 1 January 2011 to 30 September 2011 the enemy inflicted 4,662 casualties on American forces (353 killed and 4,309 wounded). To date I have not heard any senior official explain how we have suffered 507 more casualties so far this year despite the fact they told us last year the casualty rate spiked considerably above 2009 rates because of the increase in surge troops – nor did they explain that the 2009 rates themselves had risen as a product of the injection of thousands more troops over 2008.

An interesting observation that is difficult to explain: General Stanly McChrystal warned in the famously leaked 66-page report in September 2009 that we either surge more troops or we risked losing. In order to understand what led General McChrystal in part to arrive at this stark conclusion, let's look at the casualty rate comparing January-September 2008 to January-September 2009. What we discover is that in fact the total casualty rate jumped 48% from 2008 to 2009. When you look at the numbers making up that percentage increase, however, and compare it with the number of casualties we've suffered in the two years since, you discover something very difficult to reconcile with numerous public statements of success.

During the period January-September 2008 America suffered 930 total casualties (135 killed, 795 wounded). Covering the same period in 2009 the numbers were 1,764 (222 killed, 1,542 wounded). So General McChrystal raised considerable alarm in 2009 because we had suffered 834 more total casualties than the year before, but exactly one year later, that number had shot up well over double, increasing by 2,391. Now a year after that, the number of US casualties has risen yet again, this time by 507.

Thus, however one wants to selectively view the numbers, these totals are indisputable:
In comparison of January-September 2009 when General McChrystal suggested we were in real peril to January-September 2011, here are the key measurements:

	2009	**2011**	**% Change**

Overall acts of Violence:	15,219	27,740	**+ 82%**
Total Number IEDs (found + exploded):	5,184	11,074	**+113%**
US Casualties (killed and wounded)	1,764	4,662	**+164%**

In order to place these figures in context, it is instructive to examine the effects of the Iraq Surge of 2007 over an equal period. I do not have access to all the categories of information in the Jan-Sep timeframe for Iraq, but I can look at casualty rates and overall violence for over the nine month timeframe and during the same two year window.

The pinnacle of violence in the Iraq war took place in 2007. Examining US killed and wounded in Iraq for the time period Jan-Sep 2007 and looking again in Jan-Sep 2009 – two years after the surge in which senior US leaders claimed success - we see that US casualties plummeted by 69%. Even more pronounced, note the graph depicting the dramatic drop-off of violence following the surge of US troops over the two years from 2007 to 2009:

	2007	**2009**	**% Change**
US Casualties (killed and wounded)	6,251	1,930	**- 69%**

The bottom line in terms of violence and casualties is that no matter how one wants to parse the numbers, it is clear that the Taliban has adjusted to our every move. By any objective analysis, the violence has indeed diminished in a few areas, but increased in others, as it has done throughout the war. But the most troubling category is US Casualties. Since 2009 when General McChrystal reported we were in real trouble, overall violence has almost doubled but our casualty rate has come close to tripling. How can the low numbers in 2009 represent near-disaster while the dramatically larger numbers in 2011 represent success?

On 10 July 2011 the New York Times ran a story about the pending retirement of General David Petraeus. In this article they reported that General Petraeus cited dropping casualty rates as evidence things were improving. Carlotta Gall reported, "Yet the general said signs of progress were beginning to appear. Insurgent attacks were down in May and June compared with the same months in 2010, and July is showing the same trend, he said. 'This just means that they have less capacity; they have been degraded somewhat,' he said of the insurgents. 'This is the first real indicator — for the first time since 2006 — compared to the previous year, insurgent attack numbers are lower.'

Yet only weeks after General Petraeus' comments, according to iCasualties.org, U.S. casualties from January to September 2010 were 4,155 killed and wounded, while the same period in 2011 saw 4,662 U.S. troops killed or wounded; an *increase* of over 500. General Petraeus had claimed in his 10 July 2011 interview with Carlotta Gall that casualty rates were falling and that the insurgency had been "degraded somewhat." Even a cursory examination of the publicly available casualty data, however, reveals total US casualties were *up*, not down. An 18 December 2011 article in the National Journal also noted the contradiction:

> The Pentagon is pointing to the falling numbers of U.S. deaths to bolster its contention that the U.S.-led military alliance in Afghanistan has gained the upper hand over the Taliban and is now winning the conflict. It's far from clear that momentum has conclusively shifted to the NATO coalition, but the

> optimism of senior U.S. policymakers is a striking departure from their usually cautious public statements about the war. "I really think that for all the sacrifices that you're doing, the reality is that it is paying off, and that we're moving in the right direction," Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said last week while visiting U.S. forces in eastern Afghanistan. "We're winning this very tough conflict."

So in a possibly encouraging sign, there are some major media outlets that are beginning to publicly question the senior leaders' willingness to be straight with the American public on US casualty figures. Before we leave the subject of casualties, however, there is one other critical analysis to consider. As noted a few paragraphs above, in 2009 General McChrystal suggested our mission was in peril as evidenced by the growing casualty and violence rates in effect at the time. But when one examines the casualty rates over time we discover there is an interesting nexus, a direct correlation between that rise in losses and the rise in troop strength.

The Casualty-Troop Strength Nexus

The first time casualties and violence began to rise notably was in 2005. When the rise in casualties is compared to the increase in the number of American troops sent to Afghanistan on a year-by-year basis, we find an almost precise correlation. Meaning, the issue wasn't that the Taliban got stronger, the ANSF got weaker, or the Afghan government became even more corrupt – it was that as we inserted more US troops into Afghanistan we unwittingly provided the Taliban more targets to shoot at; more MRAP convoys to hit with IEDs; more forward operating bases to fire rockets into; more dismounted patrols to ambush. When the number of troops increased, we saw a concurrent rise in the number of US casualties, insurgent attacks, and IED attacks *to virtually the same percentage*, in each and every case. Thus, when we stopped adding more troops in 2010, and then withdrew 10,000 troops by the end of December 2011 – almost exactly 10% reduction in the total number of troops – we saw casualties and violence drop by the same figure! See below chart for the numbers (US troop numbers through 2010 provided by a 29 March 2011 Congressional Research Service report):

Number of Troops in Afghanistan at the height of each year:

2005	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**
21,100	23,300	26,400	35,600	69,000	102,000	102,000

Percentage Increase in troop strength from previous year:

2005	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**
15%	10%	12%	26%	49%	32%	0%

Next, the percentage of increase of US casualties, Afghan violence, and IEDs per year:

Casualties:	26%	26%	43%	9%	62%	57%

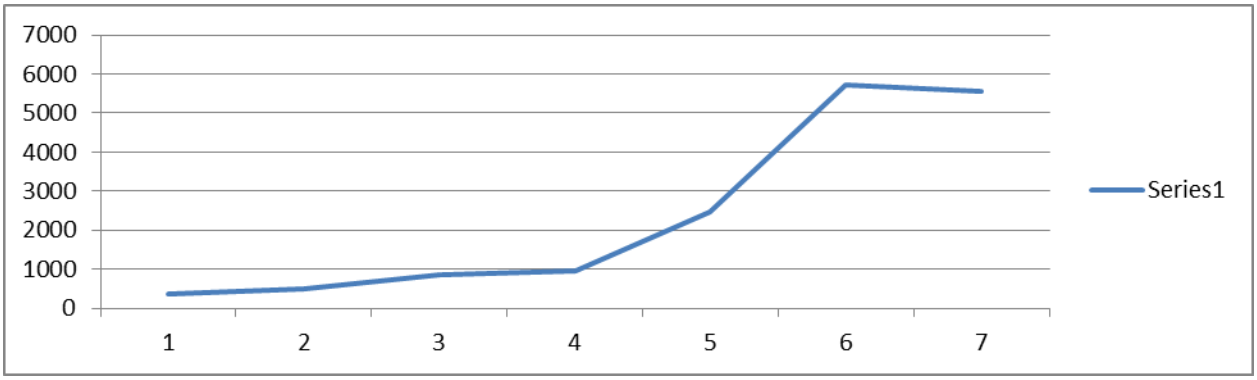
To gain a comprehensive understanding of the relationships, see the chart below that depicts the various categories of numbers and it becomes quickly evident that each time we increased the number of boots on the ground, the number of casualties shot up. With the imposition of more

aggressive tactics at the beginning of the McChrystal surge in early 2010, the percentage of US troops suffering casualties rose dramatically over previous troop increases.

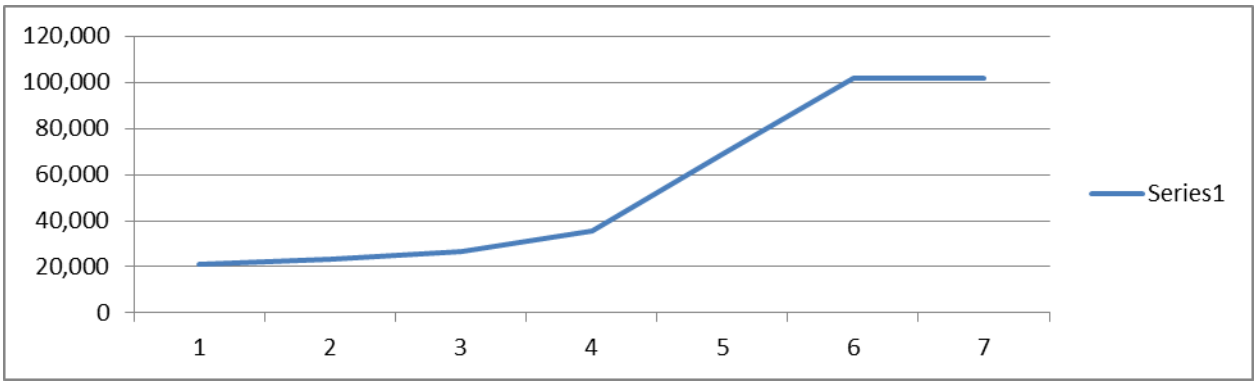
	WIA	KIA	Total Casualties	ratio of cas to troop #
2004	218	52	**270**	
2005	268	99	**367**	0.0173
2006	400	98	**498**	0.0213
2007	749	117	**866**	0.0328
2008	795	155	**950**	0.0267
2009	2142	317	**2459**	0.0356
2010	5240	499	**5739**	0.0562
2011	5124	418	**5542**	0.0543

Note in the three graphs below comparing the increase in troop strength over time to US casualties and finally the ratio of casualties-to-troops-deployed. What you see is a steady increase in the number of troops, increase in casualties, but then with the application of General McChrystal and Petraeus' more aggressive tactics, the percentage of American casualties increases even over historical norms. What is instructive to note is that with this increasing ratio of casualties we have taken, it has *not* translated into greater mission accomplishment:

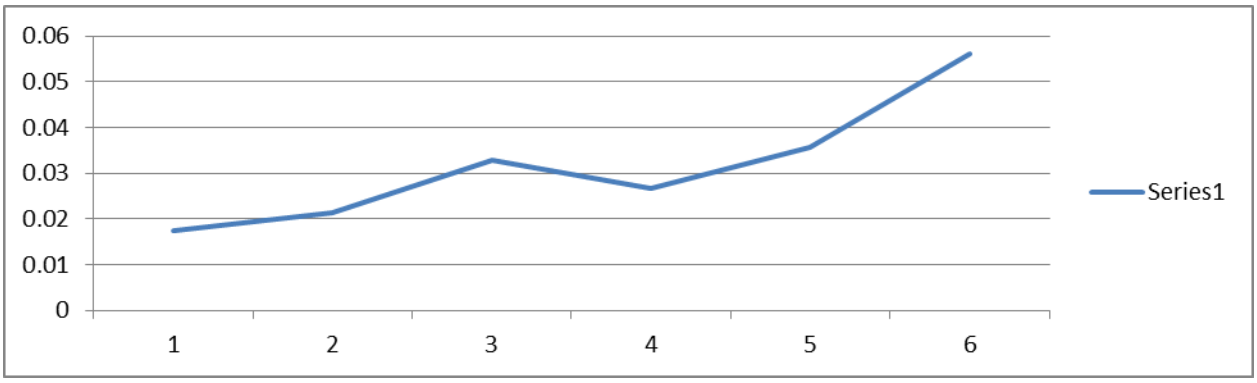
Increase in US Casualties 2005-2011



Rise in US Troop Strength 2005-2011



Ratio of US Casualties as compared to Number of US Troops, 2005-2011



When one examines the detail of the situation it becomes clear and understandable why the casualty rates increase with the increase of troops, and also why that does not translate into a successful diminution of the Taliban insurgency.

In order to pacify the contested parts of Afghanistan militarily it is my assessment it would take upwards of 300,000 combat troops, stationed in sufficient density in critical areas, in order to eradicate the Taliban element of the population and keep a close enough eye on the population to prevent others from becoming Taliban fighters. There is an obvious flaw with that concept, however, in that by imposing so many more foreign troops it would have played directly into the hand of Taliban narratives of foreign occupation and domination. However, with the presence of only 100,000 American Soldiers – only a small portion of which were actually engaged in combat operations – and approximately 50,000 from ISAF (very few of which were actually engaging insurgent troops), we had far too few troops to ever be able to militarily quell the movement. look at picture below…

Instead, when the surge of troops was deployed, we went into numerous additional mountain and desert outposts, typically dispersed in small numbers over a large area. The result – as I observed first hand and had combat troops in most parts of Afghanistan confirm to me – is that we stirred up the proverbial hornet's nest, got stung frequently, killed a meaningful number of hornets, and quite often created more hornets with our imposition in traditional clan lands. Perversely, our very presence in areas meant to "protect the population" instead turned what had been a passive population into one opposing us.

Bing West, a former Assistant Secretary of Defense under Reagan and a former Marine infantrymen in Vietnam, has written numerous articles and books on the Afghan war. In a May 20, 2011 essay in *National Review* – more than a year into the surge – Mr. West quantified the difficulty of Americans in executing the US strategy. He is describing what a Marine unit experienced in Sangin, Helmand Province, which is often heralded as an example of success:

> In its seven-month deployment, the 3rd Platoon had encountered over a hundred IEDs. The farming community knew the identity of the men who planted the mines. Out of fear, conviction or both, the farmers remained silent. … The next day, Yaz lost his right leg, and Corpsman Redmond Ramos sustained severe injuries trying to aid him. "The IED maker had been watching me," Yaz told me from his hospital room. "He set three mines. When I knelt to disarm one, another blew up under me. He was real smart."
>
> And he was real protected by the Pashtun code of silence. Maj. Gen. Richard Mills, commander of the 22,000 Marines in Helmand during March, said the Taliban "have lost the support of the people within the province." Perhaps. But the villagers remained silent about who among them were sowing the fiendish mines. Gen. David Petraeus, the top commander in Afghanistan, has referred to the population as "professional chameleons," providing support first to one side, then to another. This is understandable. A survey in Helmand last summer found that 71 percent believed the Taliban would return once the American forces left….
>
> Apart from clearing out the Taliban by attrition tactics and building up the Afghan forces, there is a fourth task for our battalions, called the "hold and build" phase. Our counterinsurgency doctrine states that "soldiers and marines are expected to be nation-builders as well as warriors." That expectancy has proved far too ambitious, if not downright arrogant. The 12 million Pashtun tribesmen whom our soldiers "secure and serve"--to use General Petraeus's term—have remained steadfastly neutral, while accepting every dollar we give them.

Thus it has been that with each successive increase in the number of US troops our casualties have increased, but the people have to date not "come to our side", the Afghan security forces have not achieved satisfactory development (even by Afghan standards), the Afghan government continues to prove itself incapable of rising above corruption, and the Taliban (and greater insurgency) shows no signs it will not be able to remain effective and resilient.

Yet our senior leaders continue to claim otherwise.

Senior Leader Public Statements over Time

Whether its General Mills telling Bing West in the above article the people have turned against the Taliban – despite Mr. West's physical observation otherwise – or General Petraeus' testimony before Congress, America's senior leaders of this current surge and post-surge period continue to make significant claims of success. But in order to place these current unsubstantiated claims into perspective, it might be instructive to look at previous commander's statements.

From 2004 through today, senior leaders from within the Department of Defense have made a number of claims of success. In virtually every case, however, the theme has been identical and consistent: our efforts are bearing fruit; the fight is hard all the time – but hard is not impossible; we've taken away some of the Taliban's most important sanctuaries – but he's a tough fighter

and things are likely to get worse before they get better; and both the Afghan government and security forces are making "real" progress and are "increasingly taking the lead".

But what is never explained is how these claims of progress and success made year after year are refuted by the physical evidence. Much evidence that can be measured and counted stands in stark opposition to these perpetual rosy assessments, and even more subjective observations – especially those made by independent observers, people without a stake in any particular method to a positive outcome – argue persuasively against these "things are getting better" statements.

Yet to this day those leaders making those comments have never been publicly asked hard and uncomfortable questions nor been held to account for the apparent contradiction between their public and private statements and the evidence on the ground. What follows is a very brief list of the statements made by these leaders in either major media interviews or during Congressional testimony during which they are sworn to tell the truth:

• **Lieutenant-General Walter Sharp,** House Armed Services Committee, Apri1 29, **2004:** "The development of' the Afghan National Army, or ANA is undoubtedly one of the best good new stories in Afghanistan ... Fighting side by side with coalition forces; seizing drugs in transit; providing security for the Constitutional Loya Jirga; providing stability during factional militia confrontations; and overseeing the cantonment of heavy weapons. Wherever the ANA goes, their fellow citizens, who are clearly impressed by their professionalism, greet them with heart-warming enthusiasm."

General Sharp told Congress the ANSF was a "good news story" - just as leaders every year since have said, and yet all physical evidence argues to the contrary.

• **General John P. Abizaid,** Commander CENTCOM, Senate Armed Services Committee, March 1, **2005:** "In the south and elsewhere around the country, remnants of the Taliban continue sporadic and increasingly ineffective operations ... American tactical commanders report that ANA companies perform extremely well in combat against insurgents along Afghanistan's southern borders."

• **Lieutenant-General David Barno,** Commander Combined Forces Command, Afghanistan; interview with *USA Today,* April17, **2005.** "Barno noted that a number of senior insurgents have already abandoned the fight and said more would follow. However, he said a small number of hard-liners funded by al-Qaeda were likely to continue the struggle indefinitely. 'The diverging organization that I sec evolving over the next year or so (involves) much or the organization, probably most of it, I think collapsing and rejoining the Afghan political and economic process,' Barno said at a news conference in the capital."

• **Major-General Robert Durbin,** Commander Combined Security Transition Command, Afghanistan, Department of Defense Press conference, January 9, **2007.** In his opening statement summing of the current situation in Afghanistan vis-a-vis the ANSF, he said, "The international community, in strategic partnership with the government of Afghanistan, continues building the Afghan National Army while reforming the Afghan National Police. We are prevailing against the effects of a prolonged war, tribalism, poverty, illiteracy and the lack of infrastructure and

we're producing an Afghan national security force that is competent and capable of defeating a determined insurgency, while setting the stage for social and economic progress."

As with General Sharp in 2004 and Abizaid in 2005, now Durbin above and Eikenberry below in 2007 repeats with conviction the ANSF is successfully engaging with NATO but four years later now, the ANSF still leads remarkably few operations and conducts almost none alone.

• **Lieutenant-General Karl Eikenberry,** former Commander, Combined Forces Command, Afghanistan, House Armed Services Committee hearing, 13 February **2007:** "The Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police, along with the National Directorate of Security arc all steadily gaining strength and have achieved impressive levels of vertical and horizontal integration under Coalition mentorship .. . They are increasingly playing a major role in ensure the stability) of their nation, as evidenced by their successful participation in every NATO and Coalition operation this past year.'

• **General Dan McNiell,** Commander Combined Forces Command, Afghanistan, in an interview with *Der Spiegel,* March 31, **2008.** In commenting on the general state of the insurgency as he neared the end of his tenure, he said, "My successor will find an insurgency here in Afghanistan, but it is not spreading, contrary to what some people say... *Der Spiegel* said the Taliban had referred to the spring of 2008 as the bloodiest spring since the insurgency began. General McNiell replied, "Do you recall the end of 2006 or beginning of 2007? They made the same prediction. But the real offensive was the offensive by the alliance and our Afghan brothers."

• **Secretary of Defense Robert Gates,** Senate Armed Services Committee, April 10, **2008:** In answer to a question from Senator Bill Nelson ("My question is, it's my understanding we still have such a paucity of troops, not only our troops, but the entire NATO force, that once we clear an area, that we can't hold it. Can you comment to the committee about that?): "First of all it depends on the part of the country. In the north, where there is less of a Taliban presence, where there has been less violence, this is not so much of a problem. In the east, where we have had a very successful counterinsurgency, where most of our forces are located, and where we have very effective provincial governors, there we have been able to *hold:*

Doubly ironic: Just three years ago Sectary Gates lauds our successful effort in RC-East as being successful and implies that due to the effective government officials there, we will continue to hold. As a result, in support of the 2010 surge he sent the lion's share of troops to the south. As a result, the insurgency expanded into the previously peaceful east and now has also expanded into the north as well. Again, not opinion, but fact.

• **Secretary of Defense Robert Gates,** Senate Armed Services Committee, April 10, **2008:** In answer to a question from Senator Levin about whether we need three or four BCTs to Afghanistan: "To tell you the truth, when I left for Afghanistan last week my impression was that the requirement was for a total of three brigade combat teams, not four... One, I think we need to think about how heavy a military footprint ought to have in Afghanistan and are we better off channeling resources into building and expanding the size of the ANA as quickly as possible, as

opposed to a much larger western footprint in a country that has never been notoriously hospitable to foreigners.

Interesting how only a year and a half later he would so dramatically change his view and advocate for a significantly *larger footprint, dismissing the concerns he made above. Further, Secretary Gates and General Petraeus were both very vocal about castigating General McKiernan – whom they later fired – for asking for too many troops. But barely one year later when Petraeus himself would replace McChrystal as ISAF commander, both would claim "only now" do we have the inputs right for winning in Afghanistan. But as you see both from Gates' comments above and Petraeus' comments below, when they had the chance to get the inputs "right" under McKiernan's reign, they both refused to support his request.*

• **General David H. Petraeus,** Commander CENTCOM, Senate Armed Services Committee, Aprill, **2009.** In answer to a question from Senator Chambliss ("But are you aware of anything that has been asked for by either CENTCOM or by General McNeil or General Eikenberry or anybody else in Afghanistan that has not been given to them in the way of resources or commitments?"): "Throughout 2009, all the way out through 2009, the requests that were made by General McKiernan that I supported and sent forward have all been approved. There are requests beyond that period that are still out there and frankly, we think its prudent to do some assessments, see how this moves forward."

• **Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael C. Mullen,** Senate Armed Services Committee, December 2, **2009.** In his opening statement, explaining why we needed to surge 30,000 troops: "Their (Taliban) fighters arc better organized and better equipped than they were just 1 year ago. In fact, coalition forces experienced record-high violence this past summer, with insurgent attacks more than 60% above 2008 levels."'

Interestingly, when Admiral Mullen made this statement, the violence in 2009 had increased 53% over 2008 levels. But one year later – a full year after surge forces went in - the violence in 2010 had increased (see ANSO report for #) over 2009 levels. Doubly important to point out: the very increase he cited was precisely in response to the previous troop increase, just as every year since 2005 the level of violence and troop casualties had followed precisely in step with the increase in the number of troops. Yet when this exact same cycle continued on after this 2009 surge decision, it was claimed by all these same leaders that it was not *an indication of increased insurgent capability, but merely the expected result of the surge troops and moving into areas where we hadn't been before to "take away" their safe havens.*

Though the events repeated the same cycle as had occurred every year before, when it suited their purposes to sound alarm to Congress and the American people, they gave a dramatically different interpretation to the same set of data. Evidence appears to have been manipulated to suit the interest of the day…

• **General Stanley McChrystal, Commander ISAF**, Senate Armed Services Committee, December 8, 2009. In his opening statement, explaining the benefits of the new surge of troops: "We also have greater clarity on the way forward. Additional forces will begin to deploy shortly

and by this time next year new security gains will be illuminated by specific indicators and it will be clear to us that the insurgency has lost the momentum. By the summer of 2011 it will be clear to the Afghan people that the insurgency will not win, giving them the chance to side with their government."

General McChrystal had cited the rising violence statistics in the summer of 2009 as evidence we were in danger of losing Afghanistan, and here suggests by the summer of 2011 - which has now passed - it would "be clear" the insurgency had lost momentum. But in July 2009 when his assessment was made there were (ANSO) attacks, which represented an (redacted) increase from 2008 - but a year later (July 2010) the violence had increased to (redacted) attacks, and General Petraeus is warning now that July 2011 will be even higher. By any assessment, our situation has not improved.

• **Department of Defense publication** *"Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan"*, 28 April 2010. In the executive summary (p.7) there is a rendering of a finding related to the percentage of the Afghan population that supports its government: "The overall assessment indicates that the population sympathizes with or supports the Afghan Government in 24% (29 of 121) of all Key Terrain and Areas of Interest districts."

• **Undersecretary of Defense, Michele Flournoy**, Senate Armed Services Committee, June 15, **2010**. In her opening statement explaining the progress made in only the first six months of the surge, she said: "Let me conclude by underscoring that our overall assessment is that we are heading in the right direction in Afghanistan. Of the 121 key terrain districts identified by ISAF in December of last year, 70 were assessed at that time to be sympathetic or neutral to the Afghan Government. By March of this year, that number had climbed to 73 districts. This and other indicators suggest that we are beginning to regain the initiative and the insurgency is beginning to lose momentum."

As an example of early progress in the mission, the Secretary explains on June 15th that of the 121 key districts, we had progressed from 70 that were sympathetic or neutral to the Gov 't to 73; but a month and a half prior to that; the DoD reported in it's April 2010 report that in fact only **29** districts sympathizes or supports" the Gov 't. When the details are read, however, the true nature of Secretary Flournoy's distortion becomes obvious. Page 36 of the April 2010 DoD report notes that of the aforementioned 121 key districts **not one** supports the government. She gave the total of two categories, giving the impression the combined total equaled 29 districts, when in fact 29 was solely for "sympathizes" with the government, while "supports" got not one single district!

Imagine if she'd accurately reported to Congress during the hearing this past June: "Well, sir, of the 121 key districts in Afghanistan, not one of them is rated as supporting the government." What do you suppose the response would have been in that chamber if the truth had been told? Yet that *is* the truth and Secretary Flournoy knew it when she crafted her speech. Either she knowingly misrepresented the state of affairs in Afghanistan in order to continue Congress' support, or the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy who is charged by the President for knowing the conditions and then providing accurately to the American public is unaware of some

of the most critical information necessary to ascertain whether our mission there is succeeding or failing. In either case, Congress was not given true nor accurate information.

Public Statements by General David H. Petraeus

This section is deserving of its own category. Excerpted are noteworthy statements made by General David H. Petraeus over four consecutive years that the fighting was "going to get worse before it gets better" - but as you know, it has *only* gotten worse, each and every one of those four years. At what point does someone call him out on this and demand an explanation as to why the casualties and violence have continue on the same arc of increase that began in 2005, without alteration, despite the annual application of thousands more troops, and despite his claim made every year since 2008 that things would get better?

• **From the *New York Times,* October 1, 2008**, *"US. general urges troop surge in Afghanistan."* After quoting General McKiernan as saying he needed another 10,000 troops, the article said, "McKiernan's comments came after General David Petraeus, who is preparing to take up his new post ao; head of the U.S. Central Command, said in an interview in London this week that he also expected the fight against the insurgents in Afghanistan and Pakistan to get worse before it gets better."

• **The *Boston Globe,* April 22, 2009**, *"Military Situation in Afghanistan will get worse, Petraeus says."* Cambridge: "General David Petraeus, architect of the US military surge credited with dramatically reducing violence in Ira, told a forum at the John F. Kennedy School of Government yesterday that the military situation in Afghanistan will probably deteriorate in the near term. 'We do believe we can achieve progress, but it's going to get worse before it gets better,' said Petraeus, the leader of the US Central Command, which oversees the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. 'When you got into the enemy's sanctuaries, they will fight you for it. There will be tough months ahead, without question' he said."

• **General David H. Petraeus, Commander ISAF, Senate Armed Services Committee, June 29, 2010**. During his confirmation hearing, General Petraeus said, "Recent months I Afghanistan have, as you noted, Mr. Chairman, seen tough fighting and tough casualties. This was expected. Indeed, as I noted in testimony last year and again earlier this year, the going inevitably gets tougher before it gets easier when a counterinsurgency operations tries to reverse insurgent momentum. My sense is that the tough fighting will continue; indeed, it may get more intense in the next few months. As we take away the enemy's safe havens and reduce the enemy's freedom of action, the insurgents will fight back."

• **The *Associated Press,* March 9, 2011** , with General David Petraeus, *"Petraeus Says Tough Summer Ahead."* Explaining that he has made progress since last year, the progress was "fragile and reversible." But in terms of expectations in the near term: "As Taliban fighters start trying to take back southern strongholds during the traditional spring and summer fighting season, violence may spike considerably, he said. 'Many intelligence estimates say that it will be as violent or perhaps even more violence than 2010, Petraeus said in an interview at his office in Kabul. 'They will come back in force. There is some concern that there will be sensational attacks that could be indiscriminate in nature,' he warned."

Further, during his year in command of ISAF, General Petraeus frequently cited the number of Taliban senior leaders killed, sanctuaries taken away, capturing "birth places" of certain Taliban leaders, huge caches of weapons and ammunition seized and untold numbers of insurgent foot soldiers tiring of the fight, putting aside their weapons and reentering Afghan society. This was allegedly done during the same time when ISAF troops increased by almost 40,000 and Afghan troops and police increased by a reported 70,000.

How is it, then, that with the addition of over 100,000 troops allied with the ISAF team and apparently significant reductions in the Taliban fighters, was there not a massive reduction in enemy attacks as we saw in 2007 Iraq? By any rational accounting, there ought to have been a significant drop of enemy capabilities. Instead they continued to increase their capability throughout the tenure of General Petraeus and has only started to slightly drop at the same time the number of American and Allied troops have begun to drop. If that hard-to-follow logic weren't enough, there's this: even though this massive infusion of troops has proven incapable of bring the Taliban neither to its knees nor to the negotiating table with hat-in-hand, we now project we're going to accomplish our objectives over the next three years *as we remove all these combat troops who have been incapable of succeeding.*

Put in plain English: you are being told to believe that the best of the combined armies of the Western World have proven incapable of beating the Taliban, that even the surge of almost 40,000 of them, equipped with the most modern arms and technology known to man, we will succeed as we are redeploying them – removing 10,000 before the end of 2011, another 23,000 by September of 2012, and one senior White House official told me the President is resolute in his intention to continue drawing down force levels all the way to the end of 2014.

What You're Being Asked to Believe

Here is the essence of what the American public and Congress is being asked to believe: the Taliban weathered 10 years of the best NATO could throw at it – to include our last, best surge effort; the Taliban are aware that we have already reduced our numbers by nearly 10,000 from what they were just months ago; they are also fully aware that over the first nine months of 2012 the number of US troops that proved insufficient to quash the Taliban will now be reduced by a further 23,000; now, according to an announcement made by ISAF Commander General John Allen, those US troops that remain are going to get increasingly out of the combat business and apply themselves more deeply into the training-the-ANSF-business. Thus, we are left with this:

1. The Taliban survived the near-annihilation inflicted on it by the US in the immediate aftermath of 9/11;
2. Between 2005 and 2009 the Taliban increased in strength and capacity, despite an annual increase in American and later NATO troop strength;
3. After General Stanley McChrystal warned in 2009 that we were in danger of losing the war, we surged a combined 40,000 additional US and NATO troops, bringing the total number of uniformed ISAF personnel to more than 150,000;

4. Despite this surge of men and material, the Taliban weathered this storm also and somehow managed to continue increasing both in terms of number of attacks and numbers of casualties inflicted on NATO;
5. We have already withdrawn 10,000 surge troops and over the next nine months will pull out the next 23,000 (along with a withdrawal conducted by our allies of some of their troops).
6. After all the foregoing, the American people are being asked to *expect* that with the removal of the surge troops that General McChrystal said were necessary to prevent defeat and which in fact failed to accomplish the objectives on which they were deployed in the first place, that somehow the Taliban will now fail!

Lest anyone be tempted to suggest the reason for the optimism is that the ANSF has grown by upwards of 100,000 during that time and are therefore able to pick up the operational slack created by our withdrawing troops, I will tell you such a hope would be badly misplaced. In any event, there is no evidence of which I am aware that would lead any rational-thinking person to believe otherwise. There *is*, however, substantial evidence – both open source and classified – that leads a rational-thinking person to the conclusions the ANSF will not be capable.



(Davis Photo) A group of Afghan men in training class for the Afghan Local Police program, 2011

To sum: in a number of high profile mission opportunities over the past 11 months the ANA and ANP have numerous times run from the battle, run from rumors, or made secret deals with the Taliban. (classified portions redacted) And I can confirm that this day's snapshot is entirely typical of every other day's totals. But these facts did not prevent the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James F. Amos from escorting one of the more highly respected foreign affairs expert in America on a tour of Helmand Province to demonstrate that (despite the known classified facts) the ANSF was making real progress.

Advanced Warfighting Experiment, 1997

In 1997, as an aide for U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, I traveled to Fort Hood, Texas, to watch the Army show off its newest division-level modernization program. Over dinner, the Commanding General of Training and Doctrine command told me that the Advanced Warfighter Experiment (AWE) had shown that a "Digital Division" with fewer troops and more gear could be far more effective than current divisions.

The next day, our congressional staff delegation observed the demonstration first hand, and it didn't take long to realize there was little substance to the claims.

Virtually no legitimate experimentation was actually conducted. All parameters were carefully scripted. All events had a pre-ordained sequence and outcome. The AWE was simply an expensive show, couched in the language of scientific experimentation and presented in glowing press releases and public statements, intended to persuade Congress to fund the Army's preference.

Citing the AWE's "results," Army leaders proceeded to eliminate one maneuver company per combat battalion. But the loss of fighting systems was never offset by a commensurate rise in killing capability, and thus as a result of the AWE we fielded *less* capable fighting formations than those we replaced. This fact was graphically demonstrated only two years after the AWE.

In March 1999, then-Colonel Rick Lynch commanded the 1st Brigade of the 4th Infantry Division (designated the "Digital Division") and led it through a tactical exercise at the National Training Center in California. In a June 2001 paper for the Institute for Defense Analysis, he wrote:

People are touting that information technology is going to show an immediate impact on our ability to conduct warfighting. They are trying to convince the world that information technology will show immediate improvements in lethality, survivability, and the ability to manage the tempo of the battle. But after hearing all these pronouncements, we then conduct a major test and these so-called improvements are not obvious. In July 1999, the Government Accounting Office published a report, ***Battlefield Automation--Performance Uncertainties Are Likely When Army Fields its First Digitized Division,*** with references to the lack of obvious improvement in tactical operations: In our opinion, the efforts thus far designed to measure force effectiveness have produced inconclusive results, with maneuver units in the field showing no significant increase in lethality, survivability, and operational tempo while modeling and simulation do show increases.

A full year *before* the first unit had even conducted ground maneuvers to validate or refute the results of the AWE, two of the Army's senior training officials LTC Billy J. Jordan and LTC Mark J. Reardon (Chief, Combined Arms Doctrine Directorate and Chief, Special Doctrine Team) co-wrote an essay in the May-June 1998 *Military Review* in which they stated the AWE's results offered a "proven vehicle" on which to base future force development. They explained:

While the basic division tasks have not changed dramatically (following the AWE), the manner and scope in which DXXI (the Digital Division) accomplishes them is significantly different

from its AOE (Army of Excellence, or DXXI's predecessor). The (operational and organizational) concept highlights the fact that digitizing C2 architecture and weapon systems has led to a quantum leap in the division combat operations' tempo… The increased synergy between the separate DXXI combined arms team components led to the redesign of its maneuver battalions. DXXI features maneuver battalions organized with three maneuver companies equipped with a total of 45 combat platforms compared with the AOE division's four companies and 58 combat platforms. This redesign decision, which resulted in significant manpower and equipment savings, also increased tactical mobility (smaller physical footprint), reduced the logistic tail and decreased strategic deployment requirements while sacrificing none of the division's overall lethality.

The methodology used during the AWE has also offered the Army a proven vehicle for future force development. The experimentation process that resulted in a DXXI design also ensured it could meet all design constraints while retaining an unmatched ability to defeat enemy forces or seize and secure key terrain. The heavy division, when reconfigured as the DXXI organization, will undoubtedly remain a relevant and capable warfighting organization well into the 21st century."

And yet as COL Lynch and the GAO report both emphatically stated a year later, the *concept* of what the AWE "proved" was not evident on the ground. Thus, all the Army's divisions were stripped of 25% of their equipment, troops, and maneuver units on a concept that had never been proven, and even when Army units physically demonstrated the new concept did not increase capability, the Army nevertheless maintained its mandate. But as I was to discover, what the Army did with one Division in the 1990s they were about to do with their entire modernization effort in the 2000s.

Future Combat Systems, 2003-2009

In the summer of 2007 I was assigned to the Future Combat Systems (FCS) organization at Fort Bliss, Texas. It didn't take long to discover that the same thing the Army had done with a single division at Fort Hood in 1997 was now being done on a significantly larger scale with FCS. Year after year the Congressionally-mandated reports from the GAO (Government Accountability Office) revealed significant problems and warned that the system was in danger of failing. Each year the Army's senior leaders told members of Congress at hearings that the GAO didn't really understand the full picture and that to the contrary, the program was on schedule, on budget, and headed for success.

In early 2008 I published an article in the Armed Forces Journal that warned of numerous potential problems if we didn't take corrective action immediately. In that article I did not include some of the more explosive facts I had observed: that several of the tests the Army's senior leaders reported to Congress as successes were in fact abysmal failures. The organization's senior leaders routinely downplayed failures and at other times created the impression of success where outright failure had instead existed. As a result, Congress funded the FCS program for more than six years, squandering more than $18 billion, before the Secretary of Defense finally pulled the plug.

Since we have still been unable to even agree on what the next modernization program will be, the future "Ground Combat Vehicle (GCV)" has yet to even be selected. Meaning, senior Army leaders' deception has cost us virtually a full decade of development. Had we been honest in the program's failures in the early days, we might have been able to cauterize the damage and refocus on other methods and means that had a chance of success. As of this writing, we are still in a holding pattern on the GCV. But the truth is this egregious failure ought never to have happened.

The senior leaders of the US Army obtained information less than a year into the program that revealed potentially fatal flaws in the system's design. Had they acted on the information and made fundamental changes early on, it is entirely possible they may have been able to save the program and actually produce effective combat gear. Instead, they chose to bury the information, continue on with the program and the individual components as originally designed, and later produced professional video presentations that depicted the FCS dominating the "full spectrum" battle space they explicitly knew it could not. In other words, they willfully told Congress that the FCS system could fight and win in an environment they knew it could not in order to continue getting funding. As I discovered during my most recently completed combat tour in Afghanistan (and as defined below), this deception by the Army's senior program leaders was effectively setting the stage for worse deception later.

In August 2007 when I first joined the FCS program at Fort Bliss, the Army plans called for the creation of 15 FCS Brigade Combat Teams (FBCT) by the year 2030. Each of these FBCTs would have been composed of 14 systems including manned and unmanned ground vehicles, two classes of unmanned aerial systems (UAS), plus a comprehensive network, plus the Soldier. In the interest of lowering logistical requirements, the Army chose to use a common chassis for all FCS combat vehicles. These vehicles are much lighter and consequently less armored than existing platforms.

This lower weight made the vehicles less survivable in combat – which was in any case illogical considering the certainty that even in 2003 it was clear time and technology would continue to see the development of stronger and more powerful weapon systems; how then, did it make sense to design a future fighting platform *less* survivable than today's vehicles? Consider recent combat experience in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The worst of the enemy in both of those wars was not a shell of the powerful future enemy we may someday face (sometimes referred to a "peer" or "near-peer"), and yet this decidedly lo-tech, insurgent enemy has been able to scrounge for sufficient numbers of powerful road-side weapons that has forced the United States to spend literally hundreds of billions of dollars to add armor to every combat vehicle in our inventory*;* even the 70-ton M1 Abrams Tank and the 30-ton Bradley Fighting Vehicle have received additional armor. If we recognized the need to upgrade the armor protection on the vehicles in our fleet that already possess the greatest degree of protection against an insurgent force that has none of the typical heavy weapons of a major power, what logic could lead one to rationally conclude that it makes sense to develop *lighter* vehicles for the future, possessing less armored protection, potentially going up against a

powerful, modern state equipped with a full arsenal of modern weapons? DoD's apparent answer: information.

In August 2003 the Government Accountability Office (GAO) published the first of what later became annual reports to congress on the progress of FCS. This report explained, "The Army believes that nontraditional fighting tactics coupled with an extensive information network will compensate for the loss of size and armor mass by utilizing information superiority and synchronized operations to see, engage, and destroy the enemy before the enemy detects the future forces."

But what is to become of this force if it engages against a robust enemy force which had its own versions of UAVs that could detect US Forces; has precision fired weapons that are as lethal as ours; has the capability to employ electromagnetic devices that jam radio signals; or that possesses the ability to shoot down the satellites upon which the entire information system depends? As stunning as it may seem, this question was answered – and subsequently ignored – in the fall of 2002 when the Army conducted a simulation exercise against what was termed "enhanced enemy threat" and the results were catastrophic for the FCS system.

In an interview with Larz Welo, a former employee of Advanced Systems Technology (AST) who participated as a member of the opposition force, he told me the exercise (using the Janus simulation system) was designed to examine what might happen if an FCS organization fought against a well equipped, modern force. Mr. Welo worked for AST from 2001 to 2003 and took part in over 100 Janus simulations using various FCS scenarios. The vast majority of the scenarios were against foes using inferior technology with average to poor equipment – like the Iraqi enemy we faced in Desert Storm and OIF I. Unsurprisingly, during those engagements FCS won every engagement – *every* engagement. But when matched against an enemy force that had the same or better technology, the FCS force was routed.

According to Mr. Welo, there were three iterations of the experiment. The "Blue Force" (the US side) was composed of an FCS Brigade Combat Team (FBCT) equipped with all the threshold capabilities expected to be fielded in the 2016 timeframe. The "Red Force" – the enemy force – was a larger force than Blue, and primarily composed of "legacy" forces, which means they were outfitted with current or old equipment. It also, however, included a number of "enhanced" forces composed of expected future capabilities including advanced tanks, artillery and APC platforms, as well as UAS and anti-aircraft systems currently under development in various countries. In the first run of the simulation, the Red force "played very cautiously," but still rendered Blue force combat ineffective "before they were even halfway to their objective," Mr. Welo recalled. The next iteration, however, proved catastrophic for Blue:

"In the second run, the Red commander decided to be very aggressive. First, we waited until the air was full of Blue Force UAVs, ground attack jets, and other aviation assets. We had previously deployed our anti-air assets but up until that point had kept them turned off. We then simultaneously turned them all on to overwhelm Blue's ability to counter them and destroyed virtually all of the Blue air assets within 5 minutes. Next we launched all of our UAVs. Although many were shot down by Blue, we had more UAVs than they did missiles. We then massed all our legacy and enhanced forces in the area together in a massive armored spear-head

attack and charged at the assembly area with about two battalions. The Global Hawk (used by the Blue Force) continued to fly so that blue forces could use precision fires to destroy many of our elements while they were still out of direct fire range. But Red had precision fires of their own and the surviving Red UAVs identified the most critical elements of the Blue force, which we then engaged with artillery and guided missiles (ATGM) from the tanks.

"When the charge came within 4 km of the Blue forces," he continued, "the (Red) tanks began to engage with direct fire and it was like shooting fish in a barrel. When Blue attempted to maneuver away, their signature reduction was neutralized and they were immediately shot. Their Active Protection System was unable to help them against the tank's ATGMs (guided missiles) and Sabots (tank main gun rounds). Blue suffered unbelievable casualties and the run was ended." As previously mentioned, though this exercise was conducted in support of what's known in the Acquisition world as "Milestone B" – which determines if the system is valid and is funded to the next level – no changes were made to either the mix of platforms nor to the concepts behind FCS. Mr. Welo provided a possible explanation as to why this might be.

"The green suiters (uniformed members of the Army) that were in charge of the gamers were split in their opinion on the implications of the results," he explained. "Those who participated in my Red camp said we should run more simulations against an enhanced threat because of the possibility that in the future this could become a real-world disaster, and those that fought with the Blue camp argued that the simulation data and parameters were flawed and that the USA would not be this outmatched any time within the next 50 years. The "neutral" green suiters seemed puzzled at the power of the enhanced threat, and seemed to believe that the result was unlikely to ever happen in real life and not a scenario that was very profitable."

I wrote articles in the Armed Forces Journal in both 2005 and 2008 warning of the dangers posed by FCS if dramatic changes were not made. My warnings were not simply ignored, but I was removed from my position in the Operations department of the program and physically moved out of the building so that I would no longer have access or knowledge of the program's development. But less than a year and a half from the date of my last article on FCS, the Secretary of Defense first cancelled the vehicle portion of the program, and subsequently abandoned the entire program, citing almost verbatim the warnings I had raised.

I cite the above not to suggest I was some clairvoyant and posses some brilliant abilities. To the contrary, there were many Soldiers in the program that knew of these deficiencies and some of them made their opinions known. In all cases their views were either ignored or they were pressured into silence. Additionally, the Army conducted extensive and expensive simulation exercises ostensibly designed to discover whether the system as designed would perform as needed in combat. When the exercises didn't return "the right answer", however, the tests were buried and never repeated.

Whether intentionally or through taking the path of least resistance, the leaders the Army placed in charge of overseeing the institution's premier modernization repeatedly told Congress the system was "on schedule, on budget" and would represent a dramatic improvement over current warfighter capabilities. Further, the Army produced a series of video presentations that depicted the system dominating in precisely the environments in which their tests had shown they would

instead suffer catastrophic defeat. Physical tests conducted at Fort Bliss, Texas during my assignment there were in some cases abject failures. Instead of reporting honestly the tests had failed, the Army's senior leaders in some cases released official Army press releases announcing instead the tests had been very successful. In one particular situation is deserving of specific mention owing to the egregious nature of the deception.

In the Spring of 2008, the FCS leaders began to take some public heat for designing a highly expensive system that was designed for state-on-state warfare on a large scale and was not useful for the wars then underway in Iraq and Afghanistan. In order to demonstrate the relevance of FCS to the present as well as the future, the Army decided to conduct what they called "spinouts" which ostensibly meant that as components of the larger system became technologically mature, they would be 'spun out' to the active force ahead of full fielding of all components in the 2016 timeframe. The first of these was referred to as "spinout 1" or SO1.

In keeping with what was already becoming standard practice by then, the "developed technology" the FCS leaders proposed spinning out consisted of items that had been developed *outside* of the program and grafted in. Thus, they were spinning out what someone else had designed, characterizing it as a success of the FCS program. But while the items of SO1 functioned in a lab (items such as ground sensors, cameras, robots and other hardware and software), there were significant problems to making it work in a field or combat environment even to find out whether there was any value-added to the warfighter. In order to validate the items were ready for use in Iraq or Afghanistan, as field test had to be conducted at Fort Bliss in the Spring of 2008. As with almost every other test, this one (known as the Tactical Field Test, or TFT) failed miserably; the bad results did not simply get suppressed, they were flipped 180-degrees and publicly proclaimed to be successes.

The TFT was an unqualified disaster; almost a failure in every aspect of the testing. Equipment malfunctioned or never worked at all; communications gear would barely work more than double-digit meters – when it worked at all – and the integration kits (known as B-kits) for the M1A1 tanks and Bradley Fighting Vehicles failed almost entirely. At that time it was clear that the scheduled limited user test (LUT) – the results of which were required by law to be reported to Congress – would likewise founder because there was almost literally no time after the previous test to make any changes or modifications in time to materially change the results of the LUT.

I have been told by officers personally present at deliberations within FCS program that the senior leadership decided to recommend shelving the tank and Bradley integration kits for the Heavy Brigade Combat Teams (HBCTs) because they had too many problems to overcome in a short period of time and instead refocus on the Infantry Brigade Combat Teams (IBCT), as they would have fewer integration requirements. Some leaders voiced concern that pushing back the timeline for the program at this crucial time could lend more ammunition to those advocating canceling the program. It was in June 2008 that two certain general officers went to Capitol Hill to brief members of the House Armed Services Committee on the progress of testing.

As you may recall, in 1997-98 I was a foreign affairs and defense aide for Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison and still have colleagues on the Hill. A friend of mine from the House Armed

Services Committee was physically present in the room when these two generals briefed Members of Congress about the reasons for changing Spinout 1 from HBCT to IBCT. What those two officers told the Members bore almost no relation to the truth of why we made the change.

The official FCS story at the time was that we made the change for two important reasons: 1) we needed to get FCS spinout technologies into the hands of Soldiers in the current fight as soon as possible, and IBCT units make up a higher percentage of those fighting in OIF/OEF, and 2) the testing at Fort Bliss has shown such success we are able to get these items out faster than we expected so we're going to "accelerate" the spinout. This story gained official traction in the draft of the FCS Spinout Capabilities Production Document (CPD) dated 20 January 2009, which says, "In June 2008, the Chief of Staff of the Army announced a refocused effort for the SO1 capability fielding from the Heavy Brigade Combat Team (HBCT) to the IBCT. *'We are listening to our Soldiers and commanders in the field, and we are giving them the capabilities they need-as fast as we can so that they can win in the current fight. We are able to do this due to the technologies that have matured over the past few years.'"*

The tests that were actually performed demonstrated precisely the opposite of what those general officers told the Congressmen in that meeting. The details of the test showed that the sensors failed in almost every test, that critical information necessary to share on the network did not function, and repeated re-runs to give the system "second chances" likewise failed. Had the Army's senior leaders simply been honest in reporting the failures it could have spurred greater innovation and changes of direction to technologies that might have proven useful. Instead, we deceived the American public and US Congress into believing the new capabilities were proving successful. Thus, as as can now be demonstrated as a widening pattern, instead of accepting the test results at face value we reinforced failure and guaranteed ultimate failure – which is precisely what happened six months later when the tests were repeated.

when the Army reported the results in a June 11, 2008 press release, a rather different outcome was described.

In order to demonstrate the vast gulf between what happened and what was reported, I will provide a few excerpts of the raw test results (for the un-edited version of the test results, see * at the end of this section) and follow that immediately with an article authored by the program's Director, then-Brigadier General James Terry showing how the Army communicated those results to the American public.

> **TFT Integration Summary 30 JAN 08**:
>
> **Run 1** (Abrams C34): Connected Abrams C34 [M1 Battle Tank] to T-UGS [Tactical unmanned ground sensor] field 3B and got the field to display on the FBCB2 [the command and control software that runs our tactical computers]. While the remaining sensors were coming online a light vehicle drove down the road and set off detections from the T-UGS field. The detection was sent from the T-UGS gateway to C34's Battle Command (BC). BC generated a ('hit') and sent it to the FBCB2 which generated an unknown icon on the screen. Abrams C34 was able to change the unknown icon to a hostile icon. When the Abrams attempted to forward the hostile icon into the network it was discovered that Abrams C34 EPLRS [another type of computer command software] was down. Restarted the Abrams and attempted to reconnect without

> success it was determined that Abrams C34 was not transmitting... We were unable to connect two T-UGS fields to Abrams C34. At this point it was decided to remove Abrams C34 and replace it with Bradley A33.
>
> **Run 2** (Bradley A33): Connected Bradley A33 to T-UGS field 5B and got the field to display on the FBCB2. T-UGS field appeared on Bradley's FBCB2. Got 9 T-UGS Nodes to display but before the remaining nodes came online Battle Command crashed. Restarted Battle Command and the FBCB2 did not come up so the system had to be restarted. Bradley A33 was restarted but while we were bringing up the T-UGS fields Bradley A33 crashed [meaning it's computer software crashed, not the vehicle]. We replaced Bradley A33 with HMMWV 1 [formal designation for a Hummer].
>
> **Run 3** (HMMWV 1): Connected HMMWV 1 to both T-UGS field 3B and T-UGS field 5B. Both fields appeared on the FBCB2 screen of the HMMWV. Sent Abrams C13 through the sensor fields as a target. T-UGS field detected the target and sent the detection to Battle Command. Battle Command sent a (report) to the FBCB2 and an unknown icon appeared. The operator changed the status of the icon from unknown to hostile and populated the FBCB2 network with the hostile. T-UGS field 5B had a gateway problem and was unable to make any detections. Made another attempt to get detections by sending Abrams C13 back through the fields, no detections were made due to field 5B still being down and field 3B going down in the middle of the run.

After the January 2008 test failed so completely, there was serious discussion in the FCS headquarters about the implications for the upcoming Limited User Test, set for June 2008. Most officers reported that there was simply not enough time to make any meaningful changes or alterations to the equipment to get a different result for the LUT, which if it failed, would carry serious negative implications for the whole program. After much deliberation a decision was made to push the actual LUT off by a year to the summer of 2009, and during the summer of 2008 to hold a less rigorous test that would not have to be reported to Congress. It was called the "preliminary" limited user test, or P-LUT.

As everyone expected, the P-LUT too failed to nearly the same standard as the TFT. Yet the senior leaders continued to represent to the American public and Congress that things were going well. In light of the above, including the actual test results, this passage from the official publication of the FCS program – known as "FCS Communications" – places into stark relief the integrity problem we have in the Army. In their 9-13 June 2008 edition the magazine reported, "A quarterly CEO council (including the civilian CEOs of the various companies providing goods and services for FCS) was held on 10 June in the pentagon with Army Secretary Pete Geren, General Wallace, Jim Albaugh, and several other One Team CEOs to review the progress of the FCS program. Thanks to all the great work of the entire FCS team we were able to demonstrate the program is making excellent progress en route to our next key milestone..."



The above photo was published on 8 June 2008 on the Army's official website (downloaded from http://www.army.mil/article/9874/nlos-c-unveiled-on-capitol-hill on 18 December 2011). The cutline read in part: "Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. George Casey Jr., viewed the system. Casey said the unveiling is a milestone in Future Combat Systems development. 'We have been talking and briefing and telling people about the FCS, and right here today it is real. After a decade of hard work and planning and effort, it is real,' he said." A high-ranking source who used to work on the FCS program for the GAO told me that this "real" vehicle was effectively a shell and could not in any real way be called a prototype (as claimed). It did not function, but only a "representative" of the real thing. But the Chief of Staff of the US Army explicitly told the American public – and the Congressman in Washington who attended the display – that it was "real." It was not.

The next day (June 11, 2008), an article released by the Army News Service and written by the program's Director Brigadier General James Terry, explained how the test had achieved great success:

> It was the first time FCS equipment has been tested in continuous operations under stressful, realistic conditions in the hands of Soldiers. By any measure, officials said it was a huge success. Soldiers verified that the equipment performed to acceptable standards, and added operational value to their formation. Soldiers were able to validate that the equipment worked as designed, with the normal challenges one would expect in an early test, and, as Soldiers are prone to do, they also discovered new and different ways to employ the systems under combat conditions to provide the most value added.

It is noteworthy that the only components from the FCS system to see action in combat were the small unmanned ground robots and small unmanned aerial vehicle – but both of those items were developed *outside* of FCS and grafted in later. Thus, *nothing indigenously produced by the program ever made it to the battlefield.* One must ask why none the Army's leaders who were responsible for FCS were ever held to account for the positive reports of success given to the American public and Congress throughout the program's existence, yet after expending more than $18 billion dollars and six years *not one piece of the program ever succeeded in making its*

way to the battlefield. Some might be tempted to suggest that it was a developmental program and these leaders couldn't have known the system would ultimately fail until the end. Overwhelming evidence, however, exposes that as completely unfounded.

The Government Accountability Office was charged with monitoring the progress of the FCS program for Congress. Every year from 2003 they produced a detailed report of the progress or lack thereof. Below is a partial list of their findings each and every year of the program before it was eventually cancelled. It is difficult to understand how anyone could claim innocence in knowing the program was headed to failure from the beginning given these detailed reports:

Issues Facing the Army's Future Combat Systems Program

GAO-03-1010R, Aug 13, 2003

The acquisition strategy for the FCS is aggressive, particularly in light of the program's vast scope. The (Systems Development) phase began with more risk present than recommended by best practices or Department of Defense (DOD) guidance. For example, many critical technologies were significantly immature and will require further development at the same time as product development is conducted. This concurrent development increases the risk of cost growth and schedule delays. Since FCS will dominate the Army's investment accounts over the next decade, any cost growth and schedule delays could affect the entire Army.
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The Army's Future Combat Systems' Features, Risks, and Alternatives

GAO-04-635T, Apr 1, 2004

FCS is at significant risk for not delivering required capability within budgeted resources. Three-fourths of FCS' needed technologies were still immature when the program started. The first prototypes of FCS will not be delivered until just before the production decision. Full demonstration of FCS' ability to work as an overarching system will not occur until after production has begun.
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Future Combat Systems Challenges and Prospects for Success

GAO-05-442T, Mar 15, 2005

The program's level of knowledge is far below that suggested by best practices or DOD policy: Nearly 2 years after program launch and with $4.6 billion invested, requirements are not firm and only 1 of over 50 technologies are mature. As planned, the program will attain the level of knowledge in 2008 that it should have had in 2003, but things are not going as planned. Progress in critical areas--such as the network, software, and requirements--has in fact been slower, and FCS is therefore likely to encounter problems late in development, when they are very costly to correct. Given the scope of the program, the impact of cost growth could be dire.
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Improved Business Case Is Needed for Future Combat System's Successful Outcome

GAO-06-367, Mar 14, 2006

The FCS entered the development phase in 2003 and has not yet reached the level of knowledge it should have attained in the pre-development stage. The elements of a sound business case--firm requirements, mature technologies, a knowledge-based acquisition strategy, a realistic cost estimate, and sufficient funding--are still not demonstrably present…. None of FCS's 49 critical technologies was at a level of maturity recommended by DOD policy at the start of a program... Also, the Army is depending on 52 complementary programs, each of which is essential for FCS to perform as intended. Some of these programs have significant technical challenges; some do not have the funding needed to complete development…. The estimated cost of the FCS program now stands at $160.7 billion, a 76 percent increase since program start.
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Key Decisions to Be Made on Future Combat System

GAO-07-376, Mar 15, 2007

The Army has been granted a lot of latitude to carry out a large program like FCS this far into development with relatively little demonstrated knowledge…. FCS software has doubled in size compared to original estimates and faces significant risks... Key testing to demonstrate FCS performance will not be completed, and maturity of design and production will not be demonstrated until after the production decision.
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Role of Lead Systems Integrator on Future Combat Systems Program Poses Oversight Challenges

GAO-07-380, Jun 6, 2007

In its management role, the LSI (Lead Systems Integrator, or Boeing) makes decisions collaboratively with the Army… However, that relationship may pose significant risks to the Army's ability to provide oversight over the long term. The Office of the Secretary of Defense is in a position to provide this oversight but thus far has allowed the Army to depart significantly from best practices and the Office's own policy for weapon system acquisitions… As with many research and development contracts, the FCS contract obligates the contractor to put forth its best efforts, but does not assure successful outcomes. Assuming that critical design review is completed in 2011, the Army will have paid the LSI over 80 percent to cover the contract costs, plus a possible 80 percent of its fee or profit. GAO has previously reported that most cost growth in DOD weapon system programs occurs after critical design review. Therefore, it is possible for the LSI to have garnered most of its payouts in costs and fees early next decade, even if despite its best efforts, the FCS capability ends up falling far short of the Army's goals.
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Significant Challenges Ahead in Developing and Demonstrating Future Combat System's Network and Software

GAO-08-409, Mar 7, 2008

Almost 5 years into the program, it is not yet clear if or when the information network that is at the heart of the FCS concept can be developed, built, and demonstrated by the Army and LSI. Significant management and technical challenges have placed development of the network and software at risk… Software being developed for the network and platforms is projected to total 95.1 million lines of computer code, almost triple the size since the program began in 2003. FCS's software is about four times larger than the next two largest software-intensive defense programs... It is unclear when or how it can be demonstrated that the FCS network will work as needed, especially at key program junctures.
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Key Considerations for Planning Future Army Combat Systems

GAO-09-410T, Mar 26, 2009

The Army will be challenged to demonstrate the knowledge needed to warrant an unqualified commitment to the FCS program at the 2009 milestone review. While the Army has made progress, knowledge deficiencies remain in key areas. Specifically, all critical technologies are not currently at a minimum acceptable level of maturity. Neither has it been demonstrated that emerging FCS system designs can meet specific requirements or mitigate associated technical risks. Actual demonstrations--versus modeling and simulation results--have been limited, with only small scale warfighting concepts and limited prototypes demonstrated. Network performance is also largely unproven.
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The Army's senior leaders developed the Future Combat Systems without a rigorous process to even validate whether it was the best or right way to modernize our force in late 1999/early 2000. They subjected it to computer simulation testing to see how it would fare against a capable enemy; it failed utterly. Instead of acknowledging the failure and either making significant changes or outright junking the idea in lieu of something that would work, they suppressed the results and never repeated them, instead changing the testing parameters until they found one in which their program would succeed. Nevertheless, they explicitly created highly sophisticated media campaigns – complete with movie-like videos using actors, special effects graphics, and specially written music – that depicted the system working flawlessly and dramatically in exactly the sort of scenarios their earlier tests indicated would fail. When faced with failure after failure in physical tests, instead of being honest and working hard to find solutions, they willingly and knowingly misrepresented the matter to Congress.

The results of our senior leaders willingness to prevent the US Congress from knowing the truth about FCS literally from its inception has cost the United States almost a decade of lost development and nearly $20 billion dollars (as to date, even the follow-up program to FCS has likewise failed to produce a single functioning prototype). Meaning, in large measure we are, in

terms of force composition, technologically at the same place we were after Desert Storm; we are decades behind where we could have been by now, and by all rights ought to be.

None of the leaders responsible for this deception have ever been held to account. In fact, most of them were given remarkable awards for their performance, given promotions, or as in the case of Major General Charles Cartwright, after he retired was hired to be the Vice President of Raytheon Network Centric Systems' Advanced Programs. Raytheon was one of the major suppliers to the FCS program, being named, among other things, as the Ground Sensor Integrator.

Were this report only about the FCS program, there would be much justification for a full investigation into the Army's senior leaders. Regrettably, however, it pales to second place for what I was to discover in Afghanistan during my one year on the ground there.

2007 Iraq Surge and What Didn't Happen

Petraeus' Legitimate 2007 Accomplishments

Some will suggest it is beyond disrespectful to suggest that General Petraeus greatly exaggerated the role of his strategy in the success that legitimately did result from the 2007 surge. "Sour grapes," some might say. But let me be clear at this point in the analysis: I am not suggesting that all of the General's accomplishments are phony. They are not. In my September 2010 *Armed Forces Journal* piece, I gave General Petraeus credit for making one of the most important decisions of the war; one which few other commanders at the time would likely have made or been able to make.

The Anbar Awakening preceded General Petraeus' appointment to be the Commander of MultiNational Forces - Iraq (MNF-I) by five months, but the 'awakening movement' had not yet made its way to Baghdad. As explained above, many of the Sunni leaders in Baghdad had traveled to Anbar to meet with the leaders of their Awakening Councils. When Abu Abed approached LTC Kuehl in late May 2007 and made an immediate impact, a seemingly small but profound event took place. General Petraeus is famous for being an intense runner/jogger, and for visiting and listening to junior officers. As circumstances would have it, one day shortly Abed's visit the General went jogging and found a group of officers on a morning jog in Baghdad and joined them. One of them was LTC Kuehl's operations officer who related to General Petraeus what had happened with Abu Abed.

General Petraeus keyed in immediately on the development and after only a little investigation, decided this was a potential game-changing development. "From the first day I was on the ground I began looking for ways to conduct some form of reconciliation," General Petraeus told me in 2010. When he heard what Kuehl's troopers had done, he aggressively ordered it spread to areas all over Baghdad, and required leaders to seek out similar local leaders to lead their own 'awakening.' General Petraeus deserves credit for this on two major counts.

First, he realized we would need external buy-in from some segment of the population against the primary enemy, AQI. But until he heard about Abu Abed, he hadn't found the right vehicle. When he did become aware, however, he correctly recognized this might be what he'd been looking for. Secondly, he demonstrated a willingness to take considerable but prudent risk; in my view there might not have been another General in a command position at that time who would have had the courage to take that risk. Petraeus was, after all, ordering American leaders and Soldiers to reach out to men and groups who only the day before had been trying (and succeeding) to kill Americans. If his effort had proven a failure, he would have been severely censored and potentially lost his command. It was, frankly, a brilliant move for which David Petraeus deserves unqualified praise. Regrettably, however, the praise must stop there.

In order to set the stage for explaining what has happened in Afghanistan since the so-called "West Point Surge (named after the location from which the President announced it to the Nation on 1 December 2009)" it is important to understand how the foundation for the strategy selected was flawed before one boot hit Afghan dirt. The Army's most celebrated senior leaders were instrumental in propagating a deeply flawed understanding of why the 2007 Iraq surge had succeeded.

The information was known at the time and a number of high ranking leaders did in fact attempt to set the record straight, but with the help of a small number of influential media personalities, a popular understanding of the main causality for the 2007 surge's success was cemented into the public consciousness: superior US generalship, a strategy of "protect the population", and the introduction of 20,000 additional US combat troops. Evidence conclusively refutes this view and will here be detailed.

Before going further, however, it is important to understand why a proper understanding of the 2007 Iraq surge is so crucial to understanding the reasons for the failure of the 2010-2011 surge. If it can be shown that we fundamentally failed to account for the main causal factor in explaining the success of the Iraq surge, then it isn't hard to understand how the foundation for our 2010 Afghan surge was similarly flawed. Meaning, the strategy chosen for our Afghan surge never had a chance to succeed – and this knowledge was available and known before hand, but was so powerfully advocated by the military heavy-weights any President would have been hard pressed to oppose.

According to Bob Woodward's 2010 book *Obama's Wars* there were five powerful advocates for sending 30,000 surge troops into Afghanistan: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, General Stanley McChrystal and General David Petraeus. How could the President, barely a year into his first term and with no independent military experience, go against this formidable fivesome? According to Woodward, in late August 2009 General McChrystal was explaining to the Secretary of Defense why he needed 40,000 troops (his original request). Woodward recalled the exchange between Mr. Gates and General McChrystal:

> How could adding more US troops, essentially duplicating the soviet numbers, get the job done? … The general said his forces would protect the people and demonstrate they were in Afghanistan to help. The Petraeus model from Iraq could be applied to Afghanistan. After long discussions, Gates found the argument very compelling. "I'll get you as many troops as I can for as long as I can," the secretary told McChrystal. "And you've got the battle space over there, and I've got battle space over here.' He would have to fight in Washington to get the troops, but he made it clear he would support McChrystal's request for 40,000."

If the details of the book are accurate, the President's instincts were right and he asked a number of hard questions. Regrettably, the answers he got from his most senior military leaders was based first on an incorrect understanding of why the 2007 surge had succeeded and by ignoring substantial evidence on the ground in Afghanistan that ought to have argued persuasively against a surge. One of his military advisors provided rational and logical advice that has turned out to be almost prescient in its accuracy. Unfortunately, despite the logic and strength of his argument this one man was not enough to overcome the combined weight of the other five.

Here Woodward details an exchange with Lieutenant-General Douglas Lute, the President's top National Security Council deputy for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan:

> "Mr. President," Lute said, "you don't have to do this. I know you know this, but let's just review the bidding here. How do we think things are going to look in July of 'll?" Lute told Obama he saw four main risks in the ongoing war. First there was Pakistan, the heart of many of the problems without solution in sight. Two, governance and corruption in Afghanistan – huge problems with no practical fix readily available. Three, the Afghan National Security Forces – army and police – could probably not be cured with a massive decade-long project costing tens of billions of dollars. Four, International support, which was in peril.
>
> "These are cumulative risks," he said. The risk in one increases risk in another… So when you look at these discretely," Lute continued, "like we did in the review, Mr. President, you might be left with the impression we can manage this risk. But I would offer you another model. That is, look at them as a composite. Look at them as a set, and then you begin to move, in my mind, from a calculated risk to a gamble."
>
> Lute did not have to add that gambling was no way to make policy. "When you look at all the things that have got to break our way, " Lute added, "I can't tell you that the prospect here for success is very high. And if you add those risks up and ask me where I think we'll be in July 2011, sort of your big decision point, I'm telling you I think that we're not going to be a whole lot different than we are today."

I was in Afghanistan in July 2011 and I can tell you that what General Lute projected in the Fall of 2009 is almost exactly what actually occurred. This ought not have been a surprise, even in late 2009. Had our senior leaders accurately portrayed what actually happened in 2007 Iraq to the President and his key advisors, it is possible – and maybe likely – he would never have made the decision to surge. That decision has cost America thousands of Soldiers killed and wounded it similarly ought not have suffered. Based in part on information I received in December 2011 (information that only a handful of English-speaking people have), I will provide a considerable body of evidence which demonstrates not only did General Petraeus' 2007 strategy in Iraq play no more than a supporting role in some areas, it may have gotten in the way in parts of Anbar Province.

As is well known, the turning point in 2007 Iraq came when the heart of the Sunni insurgency turned against al-Qaeda and joined with US Forces against them, dramatically reducing the violence in Iraq almost overnight. The overriding reason the Sunni insurgency turned towards the United States was because after almost two years of internal conflict between what ought to have been natural allies – al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and the greater Sunni insurgency - a tipping point was reached whereby the Iraqi Sunnis finally and decisively turned against AQI. Had this unnatural split not occurred, by all accounts I have been given on both the Iraqi side and the US military side, "we would still be fighting in Iraq today," in the words of two officers I know who fought there.

I will first briefly describe the belief held by the vast majority of educated people today in regards to why the Iraq Surge succeeded by the fall of 2007. I will then relate the views held by the most influential US combat commanders who led the surge efforts: then-Colonel Sean MacFarland (now a Brigadier General), who led the Anbar Awakening and then-LTC Dale Kuehl (now a full Colonel). In addition to those who knew our side the best, I will also include the results of interviews I had with an Arab interpreter who had access to a number of Iraqi and AQI leaders who at one time fought against us. The interpreter, an American named Sterling Jenson, was the senior-most US Arab linguist who accompanied MacFarland on all the awakening shuras and meetings. The Iraqi interviews were partially conducted by Sterling on my behalf and the rest as a preparation for his PhD dissertation and book.

In his confirmation hearings in Washington on 23 January 2007, General David H. Petraeus told the Senate committee regarding his pending new mission, "The escalation of violence in 2006 undermined the coalition strategy and raised the prospect of a failed Iraqi state, an outcome that would be in no group's interest... In response to the deterioration of the situation in Iraq, a new way ahead was developed and announced earlier this month. With implementation of this approach, the mission of the Multinational Force Iraq will be modified, *making security of the population ... the focus of the military effort* (italics mine)." Thus, from the very beginning it was firmly established that General Petraeus would discard the previous strategy (focused on training the Iraqi security forces and then withdrawing) and replace it with one that would focus on protecting the people.



(Davis Photo) US mounted patrol through a bombed-out Mosul in late 2008

By the time the General had returned to Washington in September 2007, the violence levels had dropped considerably and over the next six months would drop dramatically. Given that a succession of Generals at various levels had tried and failed to curtail the violence in Iraq up to that point, it was obvious to everyone that the strategy implemented by General Petraeus was responsible for the dramatic improvement. But had the supporters of the surge taken the time to conduct a thorough and unemotional autopsy on the effort, a very different story would have been discovered. The consequences for our current effort in Afghanistan resulting from this inaccurate story couldn't be more significant.

First let me explain bow the skewed story gained initial traction.

The "Odierno" Version

I base this version of events on the name of General Raymond T. Odierno because he was one of the first (and has remained one of the foremost) champions of this version of the story, and it remains the one firmly entrenched in American consciousness today. But when the "fundamentals" he and others cite so confidently are examined against the physical evidence, a rather different picture emerges.

In the days leading up to President Bush's announcement of the surge in January 2007, General Odierno had just taken command of Multi-National Corps, Iraq (NMC-I). He later came to be known as "the operational architect" of the surge in Iraq, working hand-and-glove with General Petraeus. In an interview with the official magazine of the Field Artillery, *Fires Bulletin* conducted two weeks after his change of command in March 2008, he explained for the first time

his view of what happened during the surge. This version of events has since come to be accepted as the standard, virtually without question or further examination.

In the March-April 2008 *Fires Bulletin*, General Odierno concisely explained his opinion of why the surge worked. He was quoted as saying:

> We realized that if we could protect the Iraqi people, they would be less likely to be influenced by those groups advocating violence through intimidation and coercion. So we changed our tactics, techniques and procedures to protect the Iraqis. We pushed all our units out into small operating bases in and outside the city. Previously, our troops had patrolled an area and then withdrawn into large forward operating bases. So we moved our troops out into smaller operating bases, either security stations jointly based with the Iraqi Army or police or to combat outposts that were US only. These platoon to company-sized formations lived and slept among the Iraqis, 24 hours, seven days a week. We got to know the people, and they become comfortable with our troops among them as we provided around-the-clock security. This encouraged the Iraqi Army and police to join us building a synergy of effort that further developed the Iraqi people's confidence that we could provide security...
>
> After we eliminated the enemy's safe havens and sanctuaries and protected the population, it was easier for the Iraqis to come forward to help us. But this didn't just "happen." It came after company, battalion and brigade commanders had a lot of discussions with the people, reaching out, developing relationships and trust - that's what it's all about: trust. We then began reaching out to reconcile with enemy groups, from the bottom up... Groups wanting to reconcile began coming forward, starting in the Anbar Province with the "awakenings" where tribes wanted to help us fight al-Qaeda because they believed their future lay with the Coalition.



(Davis Photo) US military trainers mentoring Iraqi police units, 2008

Some might suggest that the above-cited article was the creation of some other writer who had their own agenda and only wrote about the part of the story of interest to them. But when afforded the chance to tell the story himself in a speech given for the Heritage Foundation on March 5th, 2008 General Odierno reinforced the themes cited in the *Fires Bulletin*: "Throughout these offensive operations," he said, "we maintained constant focus on job one – protecting the population." In case there was any doubt as to what he felt was the causality for the dramatic drop in violence, he added, "I think it's safe to say that the surge of Coalition forces – and how we employed those forces – have broken the cycle of sectarian violence in Iraq." Presaging what would later be a key aspiration of the 2010 Afghanistan surge, General Odierno emphasized his belief that the factor which drove the Sunnis to working with the US was not AQI brutality, but US tactical victories. He said:

> Suggesting that the reduction in violence resulted merely from bribing our enemies to stop fighting is uninformed and an oversimplification… It overlooks the salient point that many who reconciled with us did so from a position of weakness, rather than strength. The truth is that the improvement in security and stability is the result of a number of factors, and what Coalition forces did throughout 2007 ranks among the most significant.

Another officer whose views were instrumental in deepening the public's understanding of why the surge was successful, was a man named Colonel Peter Mansoor. He was a former Brigade Combat Team Commander in Iraq from 2003-04, and served as General Petraeus' Executive Officer for the duration of the latter's tour as Commander of American Forces in Iraq 2007-08. Only months after he completed his assignment as General Petraeus' Exec, COL Mansoor published an article in the *Washington Post* (August 10, 2008), in which he amplified some of the same themes General Odierno had laid out six months earlier. He wrote:

> Of greater importance was the change in the way U.S. forces were employed starting in February 2007, when Gen. David Petraeus ordered them to position themselves with Iraqi forces out in neighborhoods. This repositioning was based on newly published counterinsurgency doctrine that emphasized the protection of the population and recognized that the only way to secure people is to live among them ... As sectarian violence spiraled out of control, it became increasingly evident that Iraqi forces were unable to prevent its spread. By the fall of 2006, it was clear that our strategy was failing... The arrival of additional U.S. forces signaled renewed resolve. Sunni tribal leaders, having glimpsed the dismal future in store for their people under a regime controlled by al-Qaeda in Iraq and fearful of abandonment, were ready to throw in their lot with the coalition.

Thus, the unambiguous belief that the vast majority of American military men and almost all the general American population came to embrace was essentially this:

- The war in 2006 was in complete disarray;
- The military strategy we had been following had proven to be an abysmal failure;
- We weren't focused on protecting the population;
- We *were* focused on turning over control of the country to the Iraqi Security

Forces (ISF) as fast as possible, whether they were ready or not;

- US Forces lived on big mega-bases and "commuted" to the fight;
- The Iraqis didn't trust us
- There was a civil war and we didn't know how to stop it;
- General Petraeus' leadership and new strategy made the decisive change by:
    - Moving off the big bases;
    - Moving in the neighborhoods with the Iraqis "24/7"
    - Employing a "protect the population" strategy;
    - We started getting to know the people and earning their trust;
    - Then we reached out to the various insurgent groups to get them to reconcile, which they did from a position of weakness;
    - The Sunnis saw how bad life would be with insurgents and when they saw we could defeat al-Qaeda, they joined us in common cause and turned on their former allies;
- A tipping point was then reached, and violence began to drop dramatically, owing to the combination of superior US strategy and generalship;

Meanwhile in the world of US politics and punditry, another tipping point was about to occur that was to have profound implications far beyond the obvious, which helps explain why virtually no elected leader has since dared to challenge public statements made by senior US generals.

When General Petraeus' mission was originally announced in January 2007, there was a howl of indignation by a significant portion of the Democratic Party, with many Senators and Congressmen suggesting sending more troops into the blood-bath of Iraq would only further destabilize a bad situation. Throughout the summer of 2007 the debate in Washington raged almost as intensely as the battles in Baghdad and Anbar. On the eve of General Petraeus' September 2007 testimony to Congress on the progress of the war, MoveOn.org ran it's now infamous ad in the New York Times captioned, *"General Petraeus or General Betray-us?"*

But in the weeks and months that passed after General Petraeus' Congressional testimony and the violence and American casualties continued a steady and dramatic drop, it became clear that the surge had indeed succeeded and by the middle of 2008, all those who had been original and vocal advocates of the surge began to crow they had been vindicated – and took great pleasure in

being equally vocal in pointing that fact out, repeatedly, and citing by name those who had been "proven wrong."

A message had been learned by the leading politicians of our country, by the vast majority of our uniformed Service Members, and the population at large: David Petraeus is a real war hero-maybe even on the same plane as Patton, MacArthur, and Eisenhower. But the most importantly lesson everyone learned: never, *ever* question General Petraeus or you'll be made to look a fool! In the years following, the "Legend of Petraeus" spread and expanded, as these things often do, and he was given increasing credit for the success.

At his confirmation hearings prior to his taking command of the Afghan war in early 2010, there appears to have been a private competition among Members of Congress to see who could place the most patriotic laurels on the good General's head. Rumors began to spread that maybe General Petraeus would retire and run for President in 2012; others suggested that no, he would be named the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and on January 25, 2011, NPR reported that two Veteran groups were lobbying to get General Petraeus a fifth star; *Vanity Fair* ran an extensive and lauding article about the General entitled "The Professor of War" which proclaimed in the opening sentence, "General David Petraeus has revolutionized the way America fights its wars."

Then his stock actually rose from its already stratospheric heights when he allegedly volunteered to leave the relative comfort of Central Command and "take a demotion," heading once again into the breach to rescue yet another failing war, this time picking up the wreckage that resulted from the McChrystal/*Rolling Stone* collision.

In this environment, who would dare to challenge or even question anything General Petraeus said? His plan would be considered right virtually by definition, and thus no need to even examine the plan in any detail; we would support it without reservation because it was *certain* to be right. But as you will see in the sections that follow, there was considerable reason to question the strategy to which General Petraeus would later commit the United States.

In the following paragraphs I will demonstrate with considerable physical evidence and common logic that a sober and objective analysis of the 2007 surge in Iraq will reveal that the strategy chosen by General Petraeus was *not* the primary reason for the genuine success we achieve, but in fact played only a supporting role

Understanding why this is so has profound implications for our current effort in Afghanistan, for we are unambiguously trying to reprise the same categorical success we gained in 2007 Iraq, but in a dramatically different environment and culture and against a very different enemy.
For reasons that will be presented throughout the remainder of this paper, I contend we chose a flawed strategy that should have been identified as an inappropriate choice before any decisions were made, is predictably failing currently, and absent an external and major new factor we will ultimately fail in Afghanistan: the consequence to our country of this failure will not simply be "an embarrassment" but comes at the price of the blood and limbs of thousands of uniformed American Service Members.

The Iraqi Version

The following section gives the views of four Iraqi Arabs who fought in the insurgency or AQI against us at one time, and later became part of the Awakenings or Sons of Iraq programs (the interviews were conducted, some on my behalf, by Sterling Jensen). According to every Iraqi source I have read about or interviewed, there was never a coordinated plan to engage in insurgent warfare after the US ground forces captured Baghdad during the initial invasion of 2003. Initially, former resistance fighter-turned-Awakening-leader in Diyala, Emad Saeed Jassim said they really believed we had come to liberate the Iraqis from Saddam, bringing freedom. But when the Coalition Provisional Authority disbanded the Iraqi Army and then fired most of the government workers in the 'de-Baathist' effort, the Sunni community viewed it as a 'de-Sunni' program, and shortly thereafter began what they viewed as a "guerrilla war for liberation from the occupying Americans."

Soon after the beginning of the insurgency, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi arrived, along with his jihadist credentials earned in the latter stages of the Soviet-Afghan war. Initially he was not affiliated with AQ, instead wanting to join the Sunni resistance. But he made a tactical decision early on which would have ramifications that would ripple throughout the entire war for the United States.

According to resistance fighter known as al-Janabi, Zarqawi expressed interest in linking with al-Qaeda in order to benefit from their access to finances and additional fighters. "We tried to prevent him from doing that," Janabi said, "because his affiliation with al-Qaeda would put the Iraqi resistance in the same category as international terrorism while the Iraqi resistance was an Iraqi one against the occupation." Zarqawi joined al-Qaeda "in order to win over the young to his organization and make the other groups weaker." But once the money started rolling in and his personal power became dominant, he began imposing his international AQ ideology on Iraqis who were only interested in their national issues.

Janabi said after the Second Battle of Fallujah (7 November - 23 December 2004) Zarqawi intensified his campaign of terror to intolerable heights. "The first step of al-Qaeda was to target mixed Sunni-Shia areas and it started displacement operations; it employed the method of displacement and cleansing of Sunni. At the same time, it attempted to physically eliminate some tribal sheikhs and competent academics of social influence within the Sunni environment. It physically eliminated them. This led to a waning of popular support for the Resistance in Sunni areas."



(Davis Photo) Iraqi soldier on a training exercise, 2009

Several of the Iraqis said the level of brutality went beyond what anyone would ever have imagined possible. It was this campaign of terror that began to alienate the Sunnis despite the similar religious affiliation. In one case a bride was taken away, had her breasts cut off, and left to die in the streets. "Their behavior was irrational, unacceptable", said one insurgent leader. "I mean neither in Sharia (law) nor in social norms nor by any standard. I mean robbing innocent people, killing them, kidnapping innocent people, killing sheikhs and scholars under flimsy pretexts that had not at all to do with the resistance, Sharia or religion."

After the February 2006 bombing of the al-Askar Mosque in Samarra, the sectarian battle between Shia and Sunni exploded into all-out civil war. "What happened," one Iraqi said, "was that al-Qaeda was targeting and displacing the Shiites, and targeting Sunnis and Shiites in general. I remember in some areas, in al-Ameriyah area, in Baghdad, dead bodies were thrown by the roadside and dogs were eating them... I told the people around, 'why don't you take these bodies and cover them or bury them?' The said that al-Qaeda prevented them from doing that. These situations pushed us to change the strategy and search for alternatives to escape this plight."

It is key to understand that at this point of the story in early to mid-2006, the Iraqi Sunni resistance still had their original goal of ridding themselves of the 'occupier.' By mid-2006 the brutality of an out-of-control al-Qaeda finally became worse to the Sunni population than their hatred for "the invading Americans." Janabi explained it this way: "Why did we work with the Americans? We want to save our country. We want to save our area. I told you - a drowning

person hangs on to a straw." Former Iraqi General Najim al-Jibouri told me, "AQI alienated the locals so much, they would have worked with the devil to get rid of them." Thus in the latter half of 2006, the ground was more than fertile in the Sunni areas and mixed Sunni-Shia areas (where Sunnis faced Shia hit squads, al-Qaeda brutality and American counterinsurgency battles) for the consideration of anything to escape the hell.

The details of the Anbar Awakening are well known, and for the most part accurately conveyed, so I won't cover it in detail here. But one thing is crucial to understand: the Iraqis had reached their wits end as a result of the brutality of AQI. Sterling Jensen has conducted literally hundreds of hours interviewing Iraqi participants of the war and he told me recently that not one Iraqi person he has ever talked to has suggested there was ever the slightest change of their view of the US military occupation: they continued to despise it.

To a man, the Iraqis I have interviewed through Jensen have said their motivation to approach Americans was solely in an effort to rid them of the blight of AQI. Many of them struggled with the contradiction of going for help to the very Soldiers they had been fighting for years. There was one other unanimous position communicated by these Iraqi men, and this may well prove to be the single most significant factor: *had AQI not turned to such brutality and begin slaughtering what ought to have been their natural Sunni allies, they would have almost certainly never come to the American's side.* Sterling Jensen reiterated this in a December 2011 interview after returning from another trip to the Middle East.

He explained he had just conducted an interview "with the best Iraqi scholar I know on the subject who moved to the US last week. He was Sultan Hashim's secretary. Hashim was the Iraqi MoD (Ministry of Defense) in 2003. We had a seven hour discussion about the events leading to the Anbar awakening and I'm more convinced had AQ acted in 2005-2006 as it is acting today, there would have been no Anbar or Sunni awakening, no matter what COIN tactics the US used. The surge would not have been successful."

Janabi put it this way: "The American did not come here as a guest. We know that he is an occupying force. But is the occupier who helps me provide security in my country better or is it better to be slaughtered every day?" he said. "Had AQI not gone against the Sunnis, it would have been very, very difficult to convince Sunnis to work with the occupation at that point," said General Najim. "Had al-Qaeda not alienated themselves from us and instead enjoyed the support of the Sunni community," said Mullah Nathem Jabouri, a former al-Qaeda leader, "there would have been no awakening and the Sunni triangle would have become an al-Qaeda buffer supported by Sunni countries to check the Iranian, Syrian, and Lebanon interference in our country."

I asked Sterling what he'd learned through the hundreds of hours of Iraqi interviews he's conducted in regard to the amount of influence "The Surge" had on their decision or willingness to approach the US. He said it was almost a non-factor. "In the Anbar Province, it was almost an inhibition," he told me. "What they wanted in the beginning was for us to tacitly support them (by not fighting against them), and to stay out of the way when they went into the contested areas to clear it of al-Qaeda. Only the Sunnis in Anbar knew who was AQ and who was not."

Al-Sattar, the Arab leader of the Anbar Awakening told Sterling he wanted the US military to stay on their bases in the outside areas while Sattar's men went into the towns and villages and attacked the AQ members. "They were perplexed," Sterling told me, "at why the US was bringing in additional battalions!" In other areas the Sunnis began coming out of the woodwork to give actionable intelligence to the US Army and Marine units, and together with the Iraqi Sunnis, turned the security situation around almost overnight.

Meanwhile, news of the success of the Sunnis spread like wildfire throughout Sunni communities elsewhere in Iraq, most keenly in Baghdad. It was there the first Arab tribal leader approached an American battalion commander (LTC Dale Kuehl) and asked for the same type of support the US had given al-Sattar in Anbar. In fact, as Sterling explained, numerous Sunni communities actually sent delegations to Anbar to meet with al-Sattar for advice on how to set up an "Awakening" in their location.

The Bottom Iraqi Line: from the Iraqi perspective, it was only the nearly two years of overt brutality and mindless slaughter inflicted on the Sunni community by its ostensible Sunni ally AQI that the Iraqi Sunnis were willing to revolt and instead partner with the US. The surge of troops in 2007 did play a role, so there is no attempt to suggest it had no place. But in case some may charge that the Iraqi view downplays the US role and overemphasizes its own, I'll explain in the sections below the views of the two US commanders who were most instrumental in establishing the Sunni transition (COL MacFarland with the Anbar Awakening and LTC Kuel with the Baghdad-centric Sons of Iraq program) confirm *the changed tactics employed by the US played only a supporting role in the ultimately successful outcome.*

The US Ground Commander Version

In this section I will share the views, opinions, and experiences of the two US ground commanders who were most instrumental in the success of the surge. The first is then-Colonel Sean MacFarland (now a one-star General) who commanded the 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division responsible for Anbar Province in 2006-07 and led the American effort in the Anbar Awakening. Second is then-Lieutenant-Colonel (now full Colonel) Dale Kuehl who was the battalion commander in the Baghdad suburb of Ameriyah where the first "awakening" (later to be known as Sons of Iraq) took place in Baghdad.

Finally I will share some of the observations of another battalion commander who fought in Baghdad, then-LTC Gian Gentile (now a full Colonel). His unit fought in Baghdad 2005-06 in some of the same suburbs LTC Kuehl would later patrol, leaving just months before the Surge was announced. It is very instructive to examine COL MacFarland's experiences because his unit began operating in Anbar a full half year prior to the beginning of the Anbar Awakening, so he has a view both before and after the turning point was reached.

LTC Kuehl was likewise commanding his battalion in the hornet's nest of Baghdad before the surge and was the first US commander approached by an Iraqi tribal leader requesting to begin an "awakening" group in his area of operation. LTC Gentile has a unique position because his · entire tour took place in the worst of Baghdad, but it ended prior to the start of the surge. He explains that the tactics that were lauded later as being the crucial difference - was in fact what

he had done for most of his tour, but without the dramatic effect because of one key factor that didn't exist at the time.

MacFarland

In June of 2006, COL Sean MacFarland commanded the 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division in the furnace of insurgent hell known as Iraq's Anbar Province. It was almost a homogenous Sunni province, and as such, almost uniformly opposed to Americas presence. In my discussions with now-General MacFarland he explained to me that from June 2006 until early September he had conducted precisely the same "protect the population" tactics that have almost universally been cited as the prime reason for success during the surge, but he realized his gains were minimal and not likely to endure. In a March-April 2008 edition of *Military Review*, he wrote:

> We reckoned the brigade had to isolate the insurgents, deny them sanctuary, and build Iraqi security forces, especially police forces, to succeed. The staff developed a plan that centered on attacking Al-Qaeda's safe havens and establishing a lasting presence there to directly challenge the insurgent' dominance of the city, disrupting their operations, attriting their number, and gaining the confidence of the people ... Although recruiting and establishing the neighborhood watch units was in important and necessary step to securing Ramadi (the capitol city of Anbar), it was not sufficient to remove AQIZ (al-Qaeda in Iraq) influence in the city completely. We needed more police officers who would join us inside the city, which our Soldiers called "the heart of darkness."

But in my interview with him, he unequivocally acknowledged: "Without the intel provided by the Awakening groups, our job would have been vastly more difficult. We could have gone into an area and over time cleared it out and slowly but surely taken control. But if the Iraqi Sunnis had remained allied with al-Qacda against us, we would not have been able to achieve anything lasting or of strategic significance." While he rightfully and appropriately notes the crucial role played by the US Soldiers of his brigade (they lost 85 men killed and over 500 wounded during their year fighting in Anbar Province), he flatly stated:

> I give huge cred it to the Iraqis who stood up to al-Qaeda. Maybe 75-80% of the credit for the success in the counterinsurgency fight in Ramadi goes to the Iraqi people who stood up to al-Qaeda and joined us in common cause. But, make no mistake, there would have been no Anbar Awakening without the US Forces. It's like asking, "Which element is the most important component in making an engine run: the spark, oxygen, or fuel?" The answer is "all three." You can debate all day long over which is the most crucial, but without all three nothing happens. It was like that in Anbar. Al-Qaeda threats and atrocities were the spark, we provided the air (or environment) to make it happen, but without the fuel provided by the various Awakening groups, we would not have achieved anything lasting or widespread.

There is a point worth making here. Many have reported that al-Qaeda "overplayed their hand'" against the Sunnis, or that they "used murder and intimidation" to control them. But none of those phrases comes close to characterizing the level of brutality – really *bestiality* - perpetrated by the agents of AQI against the Sunni population. This point is crucial to understanding what happened there and why.

Without exception, every Arab I have either read about from other studies or interviewed through Sterling Jensen emphasized the Iraqis - Sunni and Shiia were powerfully motivated

against what they viewed as the US "occupation" of their country and were engaged in what they viewed as a just and patriotic duty to liberate Iraq of "foreign forces". They were clearly willing to pay any price, even up to their own lives to accomplish that end. So when we examine the calculus necessary to get the very group of people who were fighting us to the death for the liberation of their country to instead join *with us*, you must understand how excruciatingly difficult that decision was for them.



LTC Davis posing with members of the Iraqi Security Force, 2008

It wasn't simply that AQI was killing Sunnis, but that such killing had reached levels of bestiality: it wasn't uncommon for AQ operatives to murder entire families, throwing their bodies in the street to rot and be eaten by dogs - not permitting anyone to bury them - in order to "send a message" to those not yet killed. It was only when the brutality reached these grotesquely inhumane levels that the Iraqi Sunnis became willing "to work with the devil'" for deliverance.

In our zeal to give the lion's share of the credit for the success of the 2007 surge to American innovation and tactical superiority, we have failed to consider the unfathomable depths of inhumanity our mutual al-Qaeda enemy inflicted on an entire population. Instead, we explain to Western audiences that the primary factor causing the Iraqi civilian population to turn against AQI was that the Iraqis' strategic calculus changed as a result of "coming to realize that their future lie with the coalition" and not with the insurgency. But in many areas "the insurgency'" *was* the population.

Thus, for us to believe our own press that the reason the population turned to our side was because our offer of a better life was more attractive than the life of an insurgent future fails utterly to appreciate what was important to the Iraqi people. Their desire wasn't to tie their future to "the coalition", but to get rid of the foreign military presence in their country. In order to trump the powerful emotion of defending one's own country against an invading, foreign army it took a stunningly powerful countervailing motivator: al-Qaeda bestiality that rivaled - and in some cases exceeded – the worst of Nazi atrocities.

Kuehl

LTC Dale Kuehl was the Squadron Commander of the 1st Squadron, 5th United States Cavalry that was charged with defeating the insurgency raging in Ameriyah, a suburb of northwest Baghdad. It was as violent a section of Baghdad as any ever was. He lost a large number of his men in significant, violent fights. In a March-April 2009 *Military Review* article of his own, LTC Kuehl describes in detail how his unit fought and how initially uncooperative were the Sunnis in his area of operations. But then he wrote that an important event occurred around the beginning of 2007 when a group of Imams left the area in a group and, as he later found out, went to meet other Sunnis who had direct information about the expanding success of the Anbar Awakening.

A few months after their return- after the violence continued to deteriorate and his own troopers began to suffer more casualties - one of the Imams, Abu Abed, approached LTC Kuehl and explained he was willing to go after the AQI operatives causing so much of the death and destruction in Ameriyah. In my interview with Dale he added:

> If Abu Abed or someone else would not have come forward, we would have never been able to secure the population. They were essential in giving us the vital information we needed to effectively target AQI. If the locals had continued to ally with AQI we would have continued to see car bombs and attacks against our Soldiers. It is hard to separate the tactics we used from the results we were able to achieve. COPs and T -walls put greater pressure on the insurgents because it limited their freedom of movement and also allowed us to gain more information from the populace. The first COP we placed in Ameriyah was put in on 19 May (2007), just 10 days before Abu Abed came forward. All of the factors combined to achieve the security we were able to establish. Take out any of the factors it would have probably taken longer and there would have been more casualties. In the end, I think getting locals to actively support our efforts was probably the most important factor.

As with COL MacFarland, Kuehl fought brutal and bloody battles against the various insurgent and AQI fighters. He further explained that prior to this they had cleared the enemy out of numerous areas/neighborhoods, but as soon as they had left, the enemy came back in: the classic whack-a-mole malaise; a story that had been repeated all over Iraq and Baghdad since 2004. After Abu Abed offered to help LTC Kuehl, however, the cycle of returning/repeating violence suddenly stopped. To suggest, as most do, that somehow throughout the entire nation of Iraq insurgent fighters "realized their future lie with the coalition" simultaneously and seeing that the US moved into their neighborhoods caused them to fall like a row of dominos stretches credulity.

Moreover, an analysis of the timing of when things happened proves very illustrative. General Petraeus went to Iraq after his confirmation in February 2007 and immediately ordered the change of strategy to "protect the population." The first surge brigade (2d BCT, 82d

Airborne Division) began arriving mere days after President Bush ordered the surge, and 2d BCT, 3rd Infantry Division rounded out the deployments and was in place by the first of June 2007. COL MacFarland had been on the ground and conducting COIN tactics beginning in June 2006; until the meeting with Sattar in September 2006, his efforts were violent, bloody, and inconsequential. The change al-Anbar occurred *months before* the surge decision had even been announced. Likewise LTC Kuehl's battalion fought battle after battle that achieved nothing – until Abu Abed approached (as a result of AQI's bestiality reaching intolerable levels) and made common cause with the US. In both cases the difference was made only when the insurgent groups turned against AQI. To provide a more graphic example of how the same tactics achieved nothing of significance without the factor of a turned Sunni population, consider the experience of LTC Kuehl's predecessor in Ameriyah.

LTC Gian Gentile was responsible for the Ameriyah district until September 2006 and employed classic COIN tactics throughout his deployment resulting in violent, bloody and indecisive battles. He was followed in September 2006 in Ameriyah by LTC Kuehl's 1-5 CAV and likewise used classic COIN tactics and fought violent, bloody and indecisive battles until June of 2007 with the appearance of Abu Abed.

Thus, although tens of thousands of additional US combat troops deployed to Iraq and began to execute the new strategy immediately upon General Petraeus' assumption of command, it was interesting that the Anbar Awakening originated with a BCT that had been on the ground for almost a half year prior to its beginning. Further, the first recorded instance of the awakening in Baghdad occurred in an area where two consecutive battalions had been executing the same or similar tactics for almost a year and a half prior to the arrival of Abu Abed.

Julian Barns of the *Los Angeles Times* wrote an article on July 8, 2008 detailing the actions of one of the surge units, 1st Squadron, 8th United States Cavalry, located in the eastern region of Baghdad known as Ubaidi, near Sadr City. His account of how this unit fared in its mission does not support the Odierno version of success and is almost never discussed when analyzing the Iraqi surge. No wonder, as it is further evidence that things did not work out as we were led to believe. "Iraqis who live nearby," he wrote, "say they feel less safe now, because many of the bases have quickly become magnets for rocket and mortar attacks. When attacks miss the troops, they often hit Iraqi civilians." Addressing the charge that many made regarding our propensity to garrison "large FOBs" instead of living with the people, he wrote:

> Moving Soldiers to smaller bases inside Baghdad, according to the counterinsurgency experts, would allow them to spend more time interacting with the population. Regular contact with U.S. troops would make people feel safer, the main mission of counterinsurgency operations. In practice, however, the outpost strategy has a key flaw: As many as half the soldiers there at any one time are dedicated to protecting the outpost. "In my tactical opinion, the combat outpost hasn't worked," said one junior officer stationed in east Baghdad. "It's not a bad idea, but we are doing it wrong.
>
> We have a bigger presence but we have less boots on the ground. You only have one platoon that can maneuver tactically at a time." Before the outposts were created, some companies maintained a constant presence on the streets, with each of their platoons doing two eight hour patrols a day. "Before, we would do two patrols a day, of six to eight hours a day. There was almost always a patrol on the street. Now we patrol just 12 times a month" an experienced non-commissioned officer said. "That's not a lot of interaction with the people."

Providing an alternative view to the Soldiers on the ground, Barnes quoted one of the most well-known experts on counterinsurgency, David Kilcullen as saying, "'You should not think of it as a nest where you retreat to and hunker down in,' said Kilcullen ... On balance, he said, the concept is working and is helping to protect Iraqi neighborhoods. 'We are covering an area continuously rather than just visiting it, Kilcullen said. 'If you do not provide continuous coverage, that creates opportunities for insurgent to come in and kill the population." '

But were we? Again, if you examine the facts presented and apply geography and physics to the equation, a rather more complicated picture emerges.

Let's examine the physical realities of the surge in Baghdad: According to what General Petraeus told me in a phone interview in 2010 there were 77 of outposts scattered throughout 70 square miles of Baghdad, meaning on average, these things would be spread quite far apart. Other than the perhaps 50 to 75 meters immediately surrounding the neighborhood outpost, the site itself would be virtually invisible to all the other residents and neighborhoods in the sector. Thus, the six to eight hour patrols that originated from these ' local COPs' would spend almost their entire patrol in out-lying areas away from the immediate influence of the base: *just like the vast majority of all the patrols that Gentile's Soldiers conducted immediately before the surge was announced.*

Consequences of Flawed View of 2007 Iraq Surge

There are real and significant consequences for the mischaracterization of the 2007 Iraq surge described above: the differences are not academic. Had we conducted an honest post-mortem on the Iraq Surge and given credit where it belonged - while not claiming that which we had not earned – we would have rightfully celebrated a terrific military success, and provided an accurate rendering of the battle which we could then use to effectively inform future missions. Instead we practically built an industry on a COIN-myth, containing some truths, effectively burying the reality in lieu of "the story" taking credit for causality in places where it had not been earned.

In my honest and very frank estimation, American Service Members are dead today - and hundreds more have had limbs blown off – as payment for the perpetuation or this myth, for we built the 2010 surge in Afghanistan on the belief that the same "fundamentals that served us so well in Iraq" could be adjusted to fit the new effort. As has now been made very clear from the foregoing, however, the "protect the population" strategy used in 2007 Iraq was never the primary causal factor leading to success as has been claimed. Instead, it was an event entirely beyond our ability to influence or control: America's main international terrorist enemy al-Qaeda became such a heinous animal that the brutality they inflicted on our local enemy (the Iraqi national insurgency) caused the latter to turn against what ought to have been their natural ally. By burying that truth and instead elevating the myth to the status of doctrine, we have set the conditions for our own harm in Afghanistan.

Section III: The Price We've Paid

I've had conversations with a number of people over the years about the truth deficit under which many of our senior leaders suffer and on more than one occasion my interlocutor has responded with some variation of, "well, yeah, I know some don't tell the truth, but really, what do you expect them to say?" I expect them to tell the truth – and so should you. When our leaders don't tell the truth there are some potentially profoundly negative consequences for our country; some obvious, others less so.

Loss of Credibility: in the Theater of Operations

In my view, our duplicity in and around Afghanistan is one of the key problems with our efforts, and where practically speaking, our failures have the greatest negative impact. We continually convey to the Afghan people the same "victory narrative" we share with the American people, but the local population recognizes it for what it often is: fiction.

Perhaps one of the most blatant, recent, examples of how public statements by senior American and ISAF officials fails utterly to connect with the Afghan people, is what we said in response to the September 2011 insurgent attack against our embassy in Kabul. As you may recall, on 13 September insurgent fighters were able to infiltrate deep into what was thought to be the most secure quarter of Kabul to attack the US Embassy and NATO headquarters. After holding the Afghan police and ISAF military for the better part of two days, all the attackers were eventually killed or captured. The next day ISAF issued a press release regarding the attack. It read in part:

> Afghan National Security Forces, supported by Coalition forces, successfully concluded an operation this morning against a small group of insurgents who attacked several locations in Kabul city... "The people of Afghanistan have chosen a path to the future with Transition,' said Gen. John R. Allen, ISAF commander. In this attack, the insurgency succeeded in killing Afghan civilians, once again demonstrating their bankrupt ideology, which has been rejected by the Afghan people. Afghan security forces responded bravely, contained the insurgents, and systematically eliminated the threat. Once again, I was impressed by the courage, skill and fighting spirit of Afghan forces. The insurgency has again failed."

The Taliban also issued a statement regarding the attacks published the day after the ISAF release. They reported:

> How was it possible for the Taliban to enter such a sensitive area? When did they select and how did they seize such a strategic location? How did they supply such a huge quantity of different kinds of weapons to the location for this 20-hour long assault? Why was it not possible for the well-trained and heavily equipped forces of the United States, NATO, coalitions forces, ISAF and the Afghan Army to prevent the attack? ... The recent astounding attacks by the Taliban have completely foiled all the strategies and optimism of the United States because this year's attacks, as compared to the last 10 years, have proved vary fatal and disastrous. The untraceable tunnel to the prison in Kandahar, and the escape of political prisoners in a large number; the shooting down of the US Chinook helicopter in the Tangi of Syedabad and the killing of more than 30 US soldier therein; the attack on the Syedabad provincial headquarters ... and the recent attack have exposed the true face of the security situation ... Although officials in the White House and Pentagon are portraying an opposite picture of the security situation in Afghanistan to the US nation and the international community, different incidents like this assault will completely reveal the real picture in such a way that a crystal-clear difference will e made between the victor and loser.

Based on the two press releases, which do you believe is the more accurate of the two? Based on how the Afghan media reported the incident, it's fairly certain whom they chose to believe between ISAF and the Taliban media arm. On 17 September 2011, the Government daily *Weesa* published a commentary on the attack. They wrote:

> However, no one has asked why these attacks were not prevented and foiled despite the active presence of major foreign intelligence agencies in the country, in particular in Kabul. Why do these agencies carry out raids in remote provinces every night based on their information and most of the time target civilians? However, they are so reckless about the country's capital that armed opponents infiltrated in explosive laden vehicles with rockets and suicide vests and attacked key and sensitive locations... Why can major foreign intelligence agencies not prevent these attacks. Why do people not count on them? Is it enough to accuse the Haqqani network or another group of involvement in the attacks after they are carries out and cause damage? Our media has heatedly debated the strategic accord with the US and a number of experts say the strategic accord is of vital importance for Afghanistan. Can they tell us what a strategic accord mean? Kabul is not safe, let alone other provinces, despite the presence of 150,000 foreign troops and their intelligence agencies in our country. Will the signing of the strategic accord cause a miracle that will protect our life and property?

Apparently, as our doctrine emphasizes in the Joint Publications discussed earlier, our leaders believe that "Information Operations" are to be used in this war against the insurgents in the same category as sending an infantry company on an air assault mission against an insurgent stronghold. But whether the information is accurate, factual, or even beneficial seems not to be considered. General Allen was well aware that the information he publicly released was grossly inaccurate, but presumably in an effort to project that we were in charge and the attack was a failure might somehow sway the opinions of the people in Afghanistan (and "safeguard national will" in the United States).

While his efforts seem to be successful in the United States, we see conclusively the Afghan people were not swayed in the least. But as the next section demonstrates even more profoundly, because we routinely claim as truth things the local citizens know painfully well is not, our efforts at swaying Afghan public opinion with words has in fact been an utter failure.

Loss of Credibility: Local Impressions

An enormous amount of effort is expended by US headquarters in an effort to reach the Afghan civil population with messages that portray ISAF and ANSF forces in a positive light. A survey of major publications in Afghanistan, however, indicates our hard work is not succeeding. One of the key problems, as identified by the Kabul-based Afghan Analysts Network (AAN), is the disparity between what the people experience and what they hear ISAF officials say.

In a recent comparison of ISAF press releases and Afghan experiences with night raids, AAN wrote, "The big underlying question is, if there are no ways of comparing or evaluating the information that is provided and the claims that are made, then what assurances are there that they can be taken at face value - particularly in the context of consistent and often not very sophisticated efforts to 'shape the debate' and to engage in 'strategic communications.' This concern was also echoed in a Reuters report in July of this year in examining Afghan's reactions to President Obama's withdrawal announcement. Alistair Scrutton reported that the Afghans "fear the buzzword on the lips of foreign diplomats and the military, 'transition,' is little more

than a public relations tactic to cover a polite rush to the exit, that they have seen before ... ' (former Afghan Foreign Minister and Presidential Candidate) Abdullah Abdullah said the PR part of (the allies message) is very different from the real perception and belief. .. "

Repeated ISAF statements suggesting the government and security forces of Afghanistan continue to make good progress and are trending in the right direction do not appear to resonate well with the Afghan people, as numerous recent local newspaper and television articles indicate. The newspaper *Hasht-e Sobh* reports, "the government which was created with America's support has turned into the most corrupt government in Afghan history." Government daily *Weesa* explained their fears the security situation is so dire that civil war is possible when they wrote, "if in the past the Afghans complained against one another, today they cannot tolerate one another's existence... Our national unity is threatened by the selfish presence of the international community."

Former Deputy Minister of Interior Abdul Hadi Khaled was quoted in *Hasht-e Sobh* as saying, "national and ethnic differences, which have never been so strong, have reached their peak and there are no guarantees for the future of Afghanistan," and that his government was "sunk in corruption and taken over by mafia networks that is (sic) mainly held responsible for the dire situation in Afghanistan." Fabrizio Forschini wrote in a 17 October 2011 AAN article that, "several (Afghan) newspapers reject notions of an (sic) US military victory in the ten years struggle, like *Daily Afghanistan:* 'Nobody thought that the war would last several years and that the American and NATO forces, the proud and undefeatable winners of war against the Taliban and Terrorist, would leave the mission incomplete like this' while the Taliban 'have had the initiative of the war and have challenged the capabilities of the Afghan government and the NATO forces in the country." '

But perhaps the most troubling of all from America's point of view, is this quote from the newspaper *Mandegar:* "People in Afghanistan no longer believe the government, the United States and other countries when they say they will not abandon the people of Afghanistan again. Many promises have not been kept in the past ten years and not a single explanation has been given to the afflicted people."

One of the least considered consequences of mendacity, even among Members of our Congress, is that when we do not deal honestly with public audiences our credibility and reputation take significant hits. This loss of credibility itself has hidden consequences. A diplomat I know from a nation very friendly to the United States recently told me how things look to even some of our best allies. He says many in the diplomatic community aren't sure whether US senior leaders are knowingly saying things that aren't true – or something worse, in my opinion – don't know what they're doing on serious international issues. The point, he said, is that "not a few of them trust the US government's capability to understand and judge on, in particular, foreign issues. In other words, many foreign diplomats think that the US governmental officials 'sincerely' express their misunderstanding and misjudgment… I know some foreign diplomats and military guys who express their deep distrust of the US government's capability to understand foreign military issues."

If our own allies can't be sure whether we're intentionally saying things that aren't true or they believe we just have poor judgment, they are going to be very reluctant to take aggressive action that we are requesting. But there is even a problem for us when our enemies can't believe us.

When the Taliban hear our country's leaders say things with conviction that they know are bogus and untrue, then they can't trust us on any matter. In case you may feel it unimportant what our enemies believe about us, consider this. By this point everyone understands we cannot militarily win the war in Afghanistan and some sort of negotiated settlement will eventually be necessary. But if our current enemy can't trust what we say, it becomes next to impossible to reach any settlement.

Meaning, that over a given period of time when it might have been possible to reach an agreement with them to end the war, they instead continue to fight and die – and more American Service Members continue to fight and die, to have their arms, legs and genitals blown off. Thus, in a very real sense, if our senior leaders destroy their credibility with our enemy, they may unwittingly play a role in giving the enemy a reason to continue fighting and killing our troops. Until this proclivity changes it is very unlikely we'll find an acceptable conclusion to this war.

On 23 December 2011 on a Kabul TV political show called "Kankash (or "Consultation"), Afghan Senator Zalmay Zaboli expressed his views of the United States when he told the show's moderator, "Basically, the USA is not honest with the Afghan people and government. The USA is n Afghanistan to pursue its long-term objectives in Central Asia, Russia and China… The USA lies a lot… This is not a policy of the American people but a policy of the Pentagon and the CIA which are continuing to oppress weak countries the way they did in the 18th Century."

Plus, ISAF and American senior leaders often make mention of how the ISAF casualty figures are down as an example of success – but fail to mention that according to United Nation estimates the number of Afghan civilians killed in the first half of 2011 (the most recent figures available prior to the publication of this report) was *an all time high* for all 10 years of the war. ISAF is quick to point out that the Taliban/Insurgency is responsible for the majority of the deaths, but in a "protect-the-population" counterinsurgency strategy we are failing in the primary objective: to protect the population!

In large measure it really doesn't matter who kills the people, whether errant NATO strikes or malicious Taliban efforts. The bottom line is that the people are not safe and neither ISAF nor the ANSF are able to do anything about it. A key statistic ISAF doesn't even bother to track which has outsized implications for the war's outcome: assassinations.

As with the number of civilians killed in the war, the number of officials assassinated by the Taliban is persuasive evidence that both ISAF and the Afghan government are powerless to protect anyone. According to Afghan media, there were 245 assassinations between April and December 2011. When the people who live on the ground in Afghanistan see with their own eyes the violence in Afghanistan, see hundreds of assassinations – and observe while their own security forces and those of the entire NATO alliance remain powerless to stop it – and then hear

our senior leaders tell the people how the Taliban is desperate or on the way to defeat, how can they regard such talk with anything greater than contempt?

Loss of Credibility: Domestic Implications

If the American people do not demand their leaders be completely honest with them, we all forfeit the ability to determine our own destiny. If our acquiescence for a war decision is gained by some leader telling us a version of events that will result in our support – but that version is not in accordance with what really exists – how can we know whether war or supporting a war is really a good idea or not? Are the American people content to allow selected individuals, for reasons important to them, to decide when they are told the truth and when they are given fiction? When we tacitly know leaders don't tell the truth and yet do nothing about it, we effectively surrender control to our leaders and give them free reign to do as they see fit. Already we have gone far down this path and as a public have already relinquished considerable control that ought to reside in the people's hands.

For some the issue might be "problematic" or might engender no more than a head-shaking "tsk, tsk, tsk." But let me bring the issue a little closer to home. What if your son were in the Army and was sent to fight in a war whose support had been derived from spurious claims – and then your son was killed in action, or had both his legs and one arm blown off in an explosion? I have two young sons who may one day decide to serve their country in the Armed Forces. Even the hypothetical thought they could one day lose their lives in support of a conflict our senior military leaders said was necessary only to find out later was bogus is gut-wrenching. But there are tens of thousands of wives, husbands, moms, daddies, brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, aunts and uncles for whom that question is not hypothetical at all and the pain not a momentary chill, but months or years of anguish and torment.

Everyone who puts on this uniform knows implicitly they may one day have to sacrifice their life in defense of the country they love. The vast majority do not fear this possibility and in fact are proud to serve their fellow countrymen regardless of the risks. But all Americans owe it to these men and women to make sure their blood is never sloshed into the muck and mire of far-flung battlefields based on inaccurate or deceptive justification. You see, American Soldiers, Marines, Airmen, and Sailors will go and fight when ordered to do so. They won't question war and peace decisions; they will faithfully and professionally execute their mission and do their dead-level best to succeed.

While I have been discouraged at the amount of deceptive and inaccurate public information I've seen some of our senior leaders give out over the past year in Afghanistan, I have also seen some of the most brilliant, professional, articulate, funny, and ingenious sons and daughters of America execute their duty in Afghanistan. So many of them conduct themselves in the stresses of ground combat with the highest levels of honor, integrity, and dedication to their fellow Soldiers, their unit, and their country. I have beamed with pride just to wear the same uniform as these men and women and my hope and optimism for America's future was often rekindled at the thought these will be our next generation of leaders. But some of the men whose shining

eyes I looked into this past summer were only weeks later killed in action, extinguishing forever the promise and hope they once held for our country's future.

War and combat are inherently chaotic, requiring leaders to sometimes make life-and-death decisions in an instant as they face a dynamic enemy who is likewise making on-the-fly life and death decisions. Combat is not and cannot be a zero-defect environment; mistakes are inevitable and a regrettable part of war. But when it comes to issues of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, integrity, honor, and personal courage – the Seven Army Values – there is no room for equivocation. Men's lives are often on the line and the nation deserves – and needs to demand – that they be dealt with in absolute honesty.

When it comes to deciding what matters are worth plunging our nation into war and which are not, our senior leaders owe it to the nation and to the uniformed members to be candid – graphically, if necessary – in telling them what's at stake and how expensive potential success is likely to cost so that our people and elected representatives can decide if the price required in blood and treasure is commensurate with the risk. Likewise when having to decide whether to continue a war, alter its aims, or to close off a campaign that cannot be won at an acceptable price, our senior leaders have an obligation to tell the US Congress and American people the unvarnished truth and let the people decide what course of action to choose. That is the very essence of civilian control of the military. The fact of the matter is that right now those roles, relationships, and obligations are blurred, obscured, or missing in action.

Based on what I have personally observed in the decades of the 1990s and 2000s, there are serious questions that need to be addressed on whether our nation's senior military leaders have been completely honest with the American people when it comes to laying out the rationale for going to war and over the past several years, in helping us to decide whether we ought to support a continuation of the war.

Recommendations

There are the real and considerable consequences to the United States both internationally and domestically if we do not demand and receive unquestioned integrity from our senior military leaders. This report, by itself, is insufficient to reach comprehensive conclusions: I am, after all, one man. But the events in this report cover a sufficiently broad range of environments and cover the better parts of two decades to warrant a broader investigation.

It is my recommendation that the United States Congress – the House and Senate Armed Services Committees in particular – should conduct a bi-partisan investigation into the various charges of deception or dishonesty in this report and hold broad hearings as well. These are some of the critical questions that need to be answered:

- Question 1
- Question 2

- Question 3
- Question 4
- Question 5
- Question 6
- Question 7

These hearings need to include the very senior generals and former generals whom I refer to in this report so they can be given every chance to publicly give their version of events. There will certainly be no shortage of officers who will disagree with my conclusions with great energy; they, too, deserve the chance to give their views. But these hearings need also to present a constituency that has rarely, if ever, been heard from: the platoon leaders, company and battalion commanders who lead the combat troops at the tip of the spear; the squad leaders, platoon sergeants, company first sergeants, and command sergeants major. We must be careful *who* selects these individuals, but the American people need to hear from those who do the living and bleeding and fighting and dying on the forward edge of the battlefield.

Another critical group of men and women who must be interviewed in a classified setting are the mid and senior-level intelligence analysts of several intelligence agencies. While the US intelligence community received very poor marks in the aftermath of 9/11 I have seen superior performance, most notably by the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). There is not another agency within the Department of Defense that has as great a track record for accurately portraying reality on the ground and making assessments that have been proven right to a remarkable degree since at least 2005.

Further, Congress must get access to classified information and not rely on the Department of Defense to spoon-feed them. As amazing as it may seem, many minor and obscure military contractor personnel have access to classified information, classified email address, and in many cases are able to read finished intelligence reports. Members of Congress, however, have virtually no independent access to classified information.

They have no email addresses so they can receive information, no resident access to classified computers so they have the ability to read classified reports and intelligence for themselves, and most have limited or no ability to store classified documents so even if the DoD gave them documents, they could not keep them in their offices in order to study or research relevant documents. It is remarkable to consider that even minor defense contract personnel have the ability to read and study classified material, but the body charged by the Constitution of the United States to have oversight of the Armed Forces do not. This sad fact must change.

Requisite Talent Exists for Future Reform

Lest it appear all is gloom-and-doom in the Army's senior ranks, there are reasons for optimism. Since I did not hesitate to specify the names of those who have not dealt straight with the American Congress and public, let me here also point out some in our Army whose integrity remains strong and untarnished. First among those whom I have personally observed or worked for is General Peter Chiarelli. Until recently he was the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army. I first worked for him in the Pentagon in 2002 and throughout the last decade I saw him tirelessly work for the good of the regular foot-Soldier with unquestioned integrity. Lieutenant-General David Perkins, currently Commander of the Combined Arms Center, is not only one of the most accomplished tactical battlefield commanders in the Army today, his integrity and moral compass stand out even more highly than his combat exploits.



General Peter Chiarelli



General David Perkins



General JD Thurman

I have known General JD Thurman, currently the Commander of US Forces, Korea, since the early 1990s when I worked for him and I have observed him every year since continue to demonstrate honor, selfless service and loyalty to the Soldiers in the Army. Finally, what gives me perhaps the greatest hope for the Army that positive change is possible lies in America's newest Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Though I have never personally met General Martin Dempsey, I know those who have, and what they tell me is that what this man says in public is exactly what he means in private. If that be so, such news makes me hopeful indeed.



Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey

During my recently completed year in Afghanistan I also saw more than one senior commander or general officer who was clearly not comfortable with the environment created by the senior-most leaders of obfuscation (and sometimes outright deception). It will take the leadership of Generals like those I named above and numerous other leaders whose honor and integrity remain intact. The sad fact of the matter is those few high ranking men wield enormous power when it comes to deciding who gets promoted and who does not; there are many officers who would have made outstanding senior leaders but did not "play the part" to the satisfaction of those leaders and were subsequently passed over for senior positions. This is why Congressional hearings are so important. We need to give our full support to those men and women who have the moral courage and raw talent to provide the outstanding leadership so desperately need at the senior levels.

Conclusion

The United States, along with over 40 NATO and other allied nations, possess the most sophisticated, powerful, and technologically advanced military force that has ever hit the field of combat. We have the finest and most well trained Soldiers that exist anywhere; we have armored vehicles of every type, to include MIA2 Main Battle Tanks; artillery, mortars, advanced rockets, precision guided missiles, and hand-held rocket launchers; we have a wholly uncontested air force composed of NATO's most advanced ground attack fighter jets, bombers,

AWACS controllers, spy planes, signals-interception aircraft, B 1 bombers, attack helicopters, and massive transport jets to ferry our troops and critical supplies where they are needed; we have thousands of unmanned aerial drones both for intelligence collection and missile-launching; we have a helicopter fleet for personnel transport and attack support; we have an enormous constellation of spy satellites; logistics that are as limitless as the combined weight of the industrial world; we have every technological device known to the profession of arms; we are able to intercept virtually every form of insurgent communication to include cell phones, walkie-talkies, satellite phones, email, and even some ability to eves-drop on otherwise private conversations; a remarkably capable cohort of intelligence analysts that arc as educated, well trained and equipped to a degree that used to exist only in science fiction; and our various nations have the economic wherewithal to spend $10s of billions each month to fund it all. And for almost 10 years we have pitted this unbelievable and unprecedented capability against:

A bunch of dudes in bed sheets and flip-flops.

But before anyone else underestimates these gentlemen, consider also the path they've travelled to get to this place. The Taliban initially formed in the chaotic aftermath of the post-Soviet period and by 1996 had captured Kabul, where they ruled until October 2001 when the United States unleashed its post-9/11 sword. Less than four months after the first US airstrike in Afghanistan the military and political organization of the Taliban had all but ceased to exist. They were as decisively crushed psychologically as they were physically. Yet from this virtual grave they slowly reconstituted themselves in the 2003-04 time-frame and in 2005 re-emerged on the Afghan scene. .

On paper, the imbalance between the two forces couldn't be greater and ought to have resulted in a rapid and crushing defeat for the insurgent force. But wars aren't fought on paper. An unbiased analysis of the tactical situation on the ground in Afghanistan and even a cursory observation of key classified reports and metrics leads overwhelmingly to the conclusion that over the past two years, despite the surge of 30,000 American Soldiers, the insurgent force has gained strength, the number of attacks has increased considerably, and the number of American casualties has skyrocketed. The Afghan people demonstrate an alarming lack of faith in their government and security forces and according to multiple sources, despite ISAF claims to the contrary, Taliban morale is so strong that most are reported to be utterly *convinced* they have already won.

Despite overwhelming physical evidence of our failure to succeed on the military front, senior US and ISAF leaders inexplicably continue a steady stream of press releases and public statements that imply the exact opposite. Far from positively influencing the target audiences in the region, our words and actions unequivocally work to our disadvantage, as it causes both our friends and foes to question what we say. One Washington, DC-based foreign diplomat with whom I recently talked, explained that diplomats from other countries whom he knew shared his view: the problem isn't so much they have lost confidence in the truthfulness of our public statements, but possibly something worse - they suppose we genuinely believe what we're saying, but our ability to *accurately assess* difficult foreign problems is flawed.

Whatever the case, as this report has shown conclusively, despite what our senior defense leaders say in public, the military surge failed to reduce the insurgency, and with the drawdown in full

swing, our future efforts are virtually certain to likewise fail. Our consistent statements to the contrary serve only to further diminish our credibility. Without a change in our strategy in the field and a return to honest and frank public statements by our leaders, the likelihood of the United States Armed Forces suffering an eventual defeat in Afghanistan is very high.

I will end this report by answering a question many have asked me: *why write this report when you know you're going to get flamed by the Army brass?* Honestly, after all I've seen over the past decade and a half, I felt a moral obligation to do so. I believe that with knowledge comes responsibility; I knew too much to remain silent.

Further, those men in the forward battle areas have no choice. They will execute their mission no matter what, and spare no sacrifice in trying to accomplish their tactical tasks, irrespective how long the odds may be; the men and women who perform such remarkable service in the name of our country ought not have their valiant and occasionally heroic sacrifices be made without cause.

Lastly, I am a firm believer in the Seven Army Values and believe they apply *in all cases*, whether war, peacetime, or in one's personal life. These values comport precisely with my personal religious convictions, as I am a born again Christian, and am taught by the Bible that there can be no equivocation with the truth. I swore an oath to the United States and incurred an obligation to do all in my power to defend and support her. To reiterate: with knowledge comes responsibility…

I had no choice but to act.

Epilogue

From 2005 through 2010 the Taliban strength grew steadily, the number of attacks against ISAF and ANSF forces grew steadily, and their influence expanded in one form or another to most of the country. In 2011 the level of almost every metric either remained static in comparison to it's 2010 number or slightly tailed off (almost in direct proportion to the number of US/ISAF troops that likewise remained static or slightly tailed off). The Taliban is keenly aware that they were extinguished as a ruling power after October 2001 *solely* because of the actions of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda and their physical presence in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. I know ask what ought to be a rhetorical question but must regrettably be raised as an actual question:

what possible sense could it make for anyone to imagine (whether Afghan or American) that in the event the Taliban were to one day return to power - who knowing they lost power because of a group who was only a guest of their country (and a component neither of their government nor governing worldview) – would have struggled for over a decade against the most powerful military alliance in the world to regain power, and expect they would then throw it all away by allowing international terrorist organizations to use territory they control for the purpose of plotting/planning future attacks against the United States of America? They would know (and do *know) that should they ever again hold the reins of power in the open, they would be as surely*

and easily destroyed by American cruise missile technology or B52 strikes. So why would they invite certain destruction on themselves by doing such a thing?

Answer*: they would not.*

The Taliban has powerful incentive to either outright-reject al-Qaeda or keep them at arm's lengths. A 2011 report by the Center on International Cooperation out of New York suggests the Taliban *are* willing to make such guarantees. Further, consider another fact that should be blatantly evident to our senior policy-makers with regard to why al-Qaeda would even *want* to set up camp in Afghanistan again: global networking.

We have lavished praise a few of our senior military leaders for being "warrior-scholars" whose intellectualism exceeds those of most wearing the uniform. But what organization in the world today – whether an international terrorist organization or virtually every major company on the globe – needs physical territory on which to plan "future 9/11 attacks"? Most are well acquainted with the on-line and interconnected nature of numerous global movements. We here in the United States know video conferencing, skyping, emailing, texting, twittering, Facebooking, and virtually an almost limitless number of similar technologies.

And a few men have convinced virtually the entire Western world that we *must* stay on the ground in one relatively postage-stamp sized country – even beyond a *decade and a half* – to prevent "another 9/11" from being planned, as though the rest of the world's geography somehow doesn't matter, and more critically, that while the rest of the world does its planning on computers and other electronic means, al-Qaeda must be capable only of making such plans on the ground, and only on the ground in Afghanistan.

When one considers what these few leaders have asked us to believe in light of the facts pointed out above, the paucity of logic in their argument becomes evident. What *has* been present in most of those arguments, however, has been emotionally evocative words designed to play strongly on American patriotism: "…this is where 9/11 was born!" "these young men did not die in vain" "this is a tough fight" etc. It is time – *beyond time* – for the evidence and facts to be considered in their comprehensive whole in a candid and honest public forum before we spend another man or woman's life or limbs in Afghanistan.

Final Take-away

If there were only one thing I could ask you to take away from this rather lengthy brief, it would be this one page. Below you see charted over time, the rising violence from the end of 2005 through the first quarter 2011 (chart source: ANSO, 2011). All spin aside, you see regardless of who was in command, what strategy they used, or what claims they made, nothing impacted the rising arc of violence from 2005 through today. The one thing, however, that has never changed: *the upward arc of violence, which continues its rise and is expected to continue at least through this summer.*

