



## Next Steps in Afghanistan: Preparing for Elections

**William Taylor, Coordinator For Afghanistan**

**John Richards, Moderator**

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**MR. TAYLOR:** Thank you very much. It's a pleasure, an honor, to be here at the -- at one of the early sessions of this group. And I'm very pleased to be able to start off this afternoon of what sounds like very interesting presentations. I know some of the presenters, and I look forward to hearing those as well.

President Bush last night mentioned -- some of you may have heard his speech on Iraq -- and I don't want to talk about Iraq, but I would like to talk about Afghanistan. He mentioned Afghanistan as a potential success. President Bush focused, at least for a short period of time last night, on the possibility that Afghanistan could succeed. I think this, of course, true, but I also think it's fragile. I think that we are not there yet. I think we have a lot of work yet to do. We have a lot of focus yet to devote to Afghanistan. Afghanistan needs to succeed. We need to be able to see the development of an Islamic democracy in that part of the world -- in anywhere in the world, for that matter. We need to be able to see success in terms of the support that the international community can give to an Islamic republic. We need to be able to see the commitment of the United States, of the international community, of NATO -- and we'll talk a little bit about NATO later today -- toward a project in that part of the world, in Central Asia, where we don't have a lot of successes to point to.

This is going to be very important for stability in the world. It's very important to the United States. It's crucially important for the people of Afghanistan. And that, I think, is the most important thing for us to keep in mind as we -- as we move forward. This will take a long-term commitment. This will take a long-term commitment from the international community, but in particular from the United States.

So, that will be what I begin with. And I hope I will remember to end with that as well.

I was initially asked to focus on or address the topic of "Bonn to Berlin" -- the political session that established the beginning of the new Afghan state back in the Bonn meeting, the Bonn process, all the way up through the donors conference, that was actually a very donors conference just a couple of months ago in Berlin. But, I decided not to do that. In fact, I asked permission not to do that, and was granted the permission not to do that, and focus instead on moving forward, focus instead on where we are today, and how we intend to get to an important milestone, which is the two elections -- the presidential and parliamentary elections coming up in September.

And I think this -- the reason I wanted to do this, and I appreciate the flexibility of the institute -- I think this will give us an opportunity to talk about various pieces of what's going on in Afghanistan, addressing some of the issues that you described. And in more detail we'll talk about some of these issues later on in the afternoon, but we'll get into both security as well as the politics that are involved, as they are in any election, in moving forward toward those -- toward that event.

So, one thing I think it's important to recognize as we're thinking about Afghanistan today and what we're doing today is we're doing three big things at the same time. We are engaged in three major efforts, any one of which would be a challenge, but trying to do all three of them at the same time is a major -- is a major challenge. And they are, of course, the new emphasis, the expanded emphasis on demilitarization, demobilization, and reintegration -- the DDR that probably most people in this room are familiar with -- of demobilizing, demilitarizing militias, and reintegrating those militias back into society. That's a major effort -- a major effort, and we'll talk a little bit more about that. The second big thing that we're doing right now, at the same time, is we're going into a phase of eradication of poppy. We're going into a phase where we're actively out in fields in several parts of Afghanistan, knocking down poppy plants. We are actually using tractors to turn over fields so that that poppy, so those flowers, so those bulbs cannot be harvested, and that opium cannot move through the system, all the way through the labs and on into Europe and around the world. That itself is a major effort. It has potential conflict, has potential for economic disruption, and trying to do that at the same time as we're demobilizing those militias that I mentioned in the first big thing is a challenge.

The third thing of course and what I want to focus on in some length is elections. Right now, we have U.N. volunteers and many, many Afghans spread across the country of Afghanistan registering voters. And we are now up to -- somebody will correct me, but I think we're about 2.5 million voters have been registered across Afghanistan today, 2.5 million voters. Now, the estimates are anywhere from eight to 10 million eligible voters. Not entirely clear how many of those eligible voters will actually receive a card, which is what's going on right now, but it needs to be, of course, a major part, it needs to be a large number of those eligible voters need to have that card come September when they go into the voting booth to be able to cast their ballot in order to have a legitimate election.

So, this itself, when we're talking about four -- over 4,000 places that these U.N. volunteers have to go, and these Afghan registering teams go out into the country, 4,000 -- maybe 4,600 of these places, in very small villages, in very difficult terrain. And again, many people in this room have been to Afghanistan and can sympathize with the challenge, the magnitude of the challenge that it will be to get six-, seven-, eight-, nine million people registered. And again, we're at about 2.5 right now.

So, those are three big things that are ongoing all at the same time. I think it's kind of useful to kind of think about those election processes that we're now in the middle of, both from a security standpoint and from a political standpoint, and see how they apply to the rest of what we're doing in Afghanistan -- on the reconstruction, on building various institutions. I think we can see it if we just take a look at those elections.

And then what I would -- what I'm looking forward to is your questions. I'm looking forward less to my comments and more to your questions so that we can get to that, I will -- I will reserve that part of the time to do that.

Let me start off with election security. There is a plan. The minister of the interior, Minister Jalali, who has made many visits to this city -- of course, he worked in this city before he was chosen to be the minister of the interior. He is responsible for the planning of the security of these elections coming up in September. This is going to be a major effort. This is no trivial exercise. We know right now that the Taliban are not interested in seeing these elections take place. They are interested in seeing the efforts to both register and then poll the electorate in Afghanistan fail.

They have made this clear in their statements. They are also making it clear, unfortunately, in their actions. Just this morning, we heard of Taliban taking over a district in part of Zabul. This is what they used to do, and now they are doing it again.

Why? To disrupt the central government and to discredit the central government, and to be sure -- they would like to be sure that the registration and the elections don't go forward. This is a major security challenge for Minister Jalali.

Minister Jalali also has responsibility for the police, and the police will be the first line of defense, if you will, in a range of issues but including election security. So, in

these 4,600 polling places that we expect to see in September, there need to be arrangements made so that the local police are able to provide security, point security for these election booths. And it's not just the booths, of course. It's the security for the boxes as the boxes get moved back and counted. This security issue is a major effort that Minister Jalali has focused on, and his first tool is police.

The United States is helping the Germans, who are in the lead on training police. And we and the Germans hope to have 20,000 police trained, freshly trained by this summer, so that's a good start. But, you can do the math -- 4,600 polling places and only 20,000 newly trained police -- it's not enough. We clearly have more to do. And local police will augment those police, I am sure.

The second line of defense that Minister Jalali has is the Afghan National Army. And here again, the Americans, and the Brits, and the French, in particular are the ones doing the training, as you know -- and I don't have to go into detail on this. I think there's actually a session on this. Laura may be talking about the Afghan National Army later on. But, they will be the second line of defense for the election security. They won't be in every one of those 4,600 polling places, but they will be on-call. They will be located in areas where they can respond quickly to challenges, if there are problems, if there is disruption, if there are attacks on voting places, then the ANA would presumably be called in, and that we can expect. And they will need to have their mobility, and their communications, and all of the training with the people, the armed forces that are with them -- that will all have to be in place and ready to go.

The third area, the third tool that Minister Jalali has is ISAF, the International Security Assistance Force, now run by NATO, as we all know. And they have the opportunity to put more troops in. One of the ideas that we've come up with, and we can talk about this during the questions and answers, I hope, is the possibility that the Canadians, who are running -- who are kind of in the lead for NATO, ISAF, now, under General Hillier, Canadian general, head of ISAF -- the idea might be -- that they could stay on, they could stay on a month. They are scheduled to rotate out and hand over the command of ISAF to the Euro Corps, to the Europeans, come August. And it would be good, we're suggesting, that if the Canadians could stay on an extra month, if the Europeans could get there on time in August so that in September you would have an overlap. In September, you would have, therefore, nearly double the number of troops that you otherwise would have, and that would give us -- give Minister Jalali another, larger tool that he can use to provide security for these elections.

Finally, of course, standing in the largest ring, in the farthest ring, concentric circle, are the coalition forces. Coalition forces have played a major role in security of these kinds of events before. Think of the constitutional loya jirga, where these same sets of people, these same rings, with the police, the ANA, the ISAF, and then finally the coalition forces, secured successfully the constitutional loya jirga in December and early January of this year. That was a major success. And the coalition forces, I believe, played a major role in that success. You probably recall there was an offensive -- a coalition offensive against the Taliban, against al Qaeda, against those people who had made explicit threats against the constitutional loya jirga, just like the Taliban have made explicit threats against these elections coming up. So, we have that to draw on as well.

All of these elements, all of these security elements are working together under Minister Jalali. The ISAF planners, the coalition planners are working with the ANA and the police, and they are putting together a comprehensive security plan for the elections, but it is not simple.

Keep in mind those other two things that I've mentioned going on -- DDR and counter-narcotics. DDR requires forces, certainly in the background. DDR requires the ministry of defense to go out and actually provide some of the security for that. DDR requires the ANA, the Afghan National Army, to be on-call in case there are problems coming from any of the militia commanders resistant to, reluctant to turnover their weapons. Recall that.

Keep in mind, there's also an eradication program going on. The eradication program for the poppy may well run into difficulties. They may well run into farmers or traffickers, or landowners, who are not so pleased that their farms and their fields are being turned over, or being knocked down, or being eradicated, their crops being eradicated. There will be challenges of security for those as well. But, we're focused on the elections, so the priority needs to be -- needs to be on that.

Let me say a little bit about the politics of the elections. And, of course, elections are about politics. Elections are about deciding who is going to rule in Afghanistan over the next five years. The election law -- actually, I just got, before I walked out to come over here, by e-mail, a copy of what I'm told is the final election law. Now, maybe someone else has it in this room, but I doubt it. I bet I'm the first one to have it. Anybody have this? Okay. Okay. Now -- but I can't tell you where I've got it, because I didn't print it out because it was literally as I was walking out the door. But, my message is there is now election law.

The election law does describe, at least early versions that several others have read, does describe the process for selecting both the president, which is fairly straightforward, but also the lower house of parliament, which is less straightforward. The reason it's less straightforward is that the lower house is going to be an elected body, of course. It's going to be -- the seats for each province will be allocated by population, as you would expect. However, we don't have a census yet, so we don't really know how many people are in each of these provinces. Therefore, we don't really know, yet, how many delegates will come from Kandahar, just to pick a province, or from Badakhshan, or any other province for that matter. We don't know, because we don't know how many people are there.

We do know how many seats there will be. There will be 249 seats in the lower house of parliament. So, we have to allocate those 249 seats among 34 provinces. Many of you probably recall when there were 32 provinces. Now there are 34 provinces. And we can, again, talk about that. There may be more. There may be other ideas on new provinces. But the point is there are some decisions yet to be made on how to allocate the seats.

Now, what this law does say is how the voters will choose who will represent Kandahar, just to pick one. And just to explain this a little bit -- and again, we can have more discussion during the afternoon, but let's just say hypothetically that there will be 10 delegates, 10 seats allocated to Kandahar. And this applies, of course, to any other -- any other province. And let's also assume that there are three political parties that are going to be organized in Kandahar. And let's also say that there are several independent candidates who are going to be running. All of that is fine. All of that fits into the election law -- that is political parties, independent candidates.

And then the question is, how does the election work so that you can decide which 10 people go to Kabul to sit on the lower house of the parliament. And the way you will do it is fairly straightforward, and that is, every voter -- I mentioned the voters that are now being registered -- every voter with a voter registration card comes in and gets one vote. Some people had suggested maybe since they're going to get 10 delegates from Kandahar, by assumption, that maybe they should have 10 votes. No, they decided one vote, so that then the authorities, the U.N., would then count up the number of votes for every one of those people who were on the ballot.

I should say what the ballot looks like. The ballot, by assumption, three parties, 10 seats total, each party will have 10 candidates. Each party will have 10 candidates, because they all assume they're going to get all 10, right. So, there's 30 candidates right there. And then let's say there are eight independents. And so eight independents will also be on the ballot. So, the ballot that, if I'm the voter coming into the voter booth, I get a choice of 38 people on this ballot, and I get to choose one. So, they add up all the votes after everybody votes, and they see who -- which top 10 people across all of those 38 get the most votes.

Now, there's one other twist that you have to keep in mind, and that is, on average, there need to be two women per province.

So now, if all 10 of the top vote-getters in Kandahar are men, that won't -- that won't work. So, we have to figure out what to do about that. So, they've got an idea on that. And they will say that the top woman vote-getter, and no matter how many, whether -- no matter how many she got compared to the number 10 candidate, she goes, and he doesn't. So, in that way, they will try to get up to this average of two women.

So, while it's not perfectly straightforward, it is at least well thought out. President Karzai has looked at this -- at this election law a couple of times and has finally decided on this one that I have described. I hope it's still in the one that's on my screen when I get back -- I'm not entirely sure because I haven't seen it. But, that is, that's the way we expect it to happen.

Now, one of the questions that I would be very interested from this group is your analysis of what that means. I mean, Ambassador Thompson probably can figure out what it means in Kandahar under these rules that I just described. Does that mean that the most popular man -- presumably it will be the most popular man -- in Kandahar will get a whole lot of the votes in that province, and thus the second, third and fourth get some, and thus, eight, nine and 10 could be elected with very few

votes. Number one. And so that's one question. And what does that mean for the make-up of the lower house of parliament when they get up to Kabul.

Another question is, let's -- the same assumptions -- if the most popular man in Kandahar gets a whole lot of votes, and he, let's say, is from Kandahar City, what does that mean about districts in the south, for example, along the Pakistan border, that are less populated? Will there be any candidates from the south, from the districts in the south of Kandahar? Well, maybe. Maybe not. This will be a very interesting question. But I would love to get your sense of that kind of analysis of what do we expect the parliament, at least the lower house of parliament, to look like.

Let me -- I'm going to wind up here in a moment and take questions, but is that -- I should say that the upper house of parliament is more complicated. It will happen later. There will be delegates selected for the upper house from each of the provinces, and also each of the districts within provinces, and then there will be a third, the final third, will be appointed by -- designated by the president. But that will come. What we're talking about now in September is the presidential election and lower house of the parliament.

Last thing on the presidential election and then I will sum up.

We expect -- I would imagine in this room, most people expect President Karzai, number one, to run, and number two, to win. This is not our call. This is not the U.S. government's call. This is the people of Afghanistan's call, obviously, but kind of the expectations are those. It is also the case, however, that there are maybe a dozen other candidates who may well be on the ballot, and this is healthy, and this is good. There had been some discussion that the mujaheddin parties might coalesce around one candidate. That's still a possibility. But, events indicated that they may be recognizing that President Karzai is pretty strong, and that to oppose him might not be in their interests. But that then says if they cooperate, if other parties cooperate, what will that mean in terms of the make-up of the government? That is, will they expect to have major roles in the cabinet or in the parliament? This is -- these are interesting questions that are going to be played out over the next several months.

Okay. Let me just say -- let me go back to what I said at the beginning, and that is we need to stay the course. We need to keep our eye on the long term. I have been talking about between now and September, but that's just the beginning. That is just the beginning. What we need to keep our eyes focused on is what our goal is. And our goal is to have an Afghanistan that stands on its feet, that is secure, it can defend itself. It can -- it can have an army and a police force, and other institutions that make it a real state. It needs to be able to have prospects for its people, that they can be educated, and health care provided. We need to be sure that we, as the international community, have supported them until they are standing on their feet, and that could be a long time, and we need to maintain that focus.

And with that, I'll be glad to take your questions.

**MR. RICHARDS:** I'll read the questions. Let me sit -- Oh, you don't have the questions. Why don't you stay right here, and I'll just sit here and get hold of a mike. In fact, the first question I have is from Grant Smith, and I think it's --

**MR. TAYLOR:** Is Grant here? Where's Grant? Ah, there's Grant. All right.

**MR. RICHARDS:** He says, what is the experience thus far with the poppy eradication effort? Will it have a significant impact on the 2004 crop or will it just anger some important warlords in the election year?

**MR. TAYLOR:** It's too soon to say, Grant. The poppy eradication program has been going on for less than a month. It's got two phases, as you know. The first phase was started by the governors, funded by the British. The British, we all keep in mind, are the lead country -- lead nation on counter-narcotics. They have been working Minister Jalali, who in turn has been working with his governors. And some of the governors in the south have moved forward -- in Helmand, in Kandahar, and in Jalalabad, and Nangahar -- Helmand, Kandahar and Nangahar -- with an eradication program.

I can't say that it's very successful yet. There are differing reports. I've seen reports that as much as 5,000 hectares have been eradicated. I've seen reports that all of those that have been eradicated were diseased and flooded, or harvested already anyway. Not entirely clear from that.

Now, there's a second phase, that's only been going a couple of weeks, that we're funding, the U.S. government is funding, and that I've seen reports of a couple of hundred hectares have been eradicated. They first tried to go down to Nangahar, again found that they were too late, that the harvest came too soon, that the weather was too good, that the harvest had already been accomplished in many of these places, and so they are now into Wardak. And they have a couple of teams now in Wardak. They are standing up a couple of more teams, eradication teams, that will eventually get up into Badakhshan, the other big poppy-growing province. And I hope that they will have better luck up there.

But, so far, they've not had -- now, I think that's good news and bad news, frankly, Grant. I think that there is -- there is a reason why it's not so bad that we're not wiping out the entire 2004 poppy crop, and it goes back to what I said earlier about three big things that we're trying to do. (Audio break) -- and very risky for them to be planting next year. And the way we send that signal is that we send eradicators out this year. The way we send that signal also is for President Karzai to keep doing what he's been doing, and that's saying that growing poppy is against the law, it's against religion, and it is damaging to the country. And he needs to be sending that social signal at the same time there is enforcement of the law and eradication, and at the same time that there's alternative livelihoods, alternative crops are being identified.

Now, we need to send that signal. We need to do as much of the eradication as we can this year, but we are not moving into a way, I don't believe -- at least not yet, based on what I've described as our current efforts, that will cause great unrest across the countryside.

**MR. RICHARDS:** I think you've partially answered a follow-up question here. The eradication of poppy fields is necessary for the construction of a legitimate and stable state, something I would second. However, what are the truly viable economic alternatives and incentives for struggling farmers to survive? And I think that --

**MR. TAYLOR:** One other thing to recognize is that most, but not all farmers, had other crops that they planted before this year or last year. Most farmers -- indeed, most farmers still have multiple crops. They inter-crop. They plant wheat. Some will plant rapeseed. Some will plant poppy in between those. And so when you -- many of us have gone through -- and I see Elizabeth Tikashvili (ph) back there. I have traveled through many poppy fields with Elizabeth, and we saw many beautiful fields of poppy flowers right next to wheat fields and other vegetable fields, which is why, of course, you can't go and eradicate through spray; you know, herbicides and those kinds of things.

But what you notice from that is that there are alternatives. There already are alternatives, number one. Number two, there are programs that the British are very interested in, that we're very interested in, that USAID and the INL, the other part of the State Department, are funding that identify alternatives.

We're building a lot of roads. We are hiring people into the Afghan national army. We are training the police. That requires a large number as well. There's probably plenty of police out there. There are probably not a whole lot of new slots for that. But there are alternatives that are out there. We need to identify those and we need to keep pushing forward on them.

**MR. RICHARDS:** Thank you, Bill. I'm sorry, but I think we're going to have to stop here because we've got a very tight schedule. But I think the opium question gets at the heart of many issues that you're dealing with. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

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