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Brussels Forum

The Afghanistan Endgame

Mr. Ivan Vejvoda: May I please ask you--may I please ask you to take your seats? Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome back from the Moroccan tea break. As you see, I'm not Craig Kennedy. My name is Ivan Vejvoda, vice president at the German Marshall Fund. I work with Craig and this whole team. And it's a real pleasure and honor to welcome you to this session, the Afghanistan Endgame. And, of course, we're extremely pleased to have Lyse Doucet back with us. So I leave you all in her able hands. Lyse?

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Thank you. Welcome to all of you. What is this session called? Afghanistan The Endgame. And as many of you will know, what is an Endgame? Well, in chess or bridge, it's the last phases of the game, in which there are few pieces or cards remaining on the table.

What does that mean for Afghanistan? Well, by 2014, nearly all of the 130,000 foreign troops in Afghanistan from some 50 countries will leave, except, of course, if there is a strategic partnership with the United States, which will leave some troops behind. And we believe that is what Afghan and U.S. leaders want. There's a civilian side of that too, another piece that's on the table. And governments around the world are saying, "We're not going to simply stop our aid because the troops are pulling out."

The political dimension always matters too, crucially in this Endgame. And some people would say that there were actually more Taliban pieces on the board than there were in 2001, that the Taliban are actually ascendant, but a very preliminary process of talks with the Taliban has started.

Another factor, public opinion. Public opinion in the United States and in other Western capitals, where there were angry responses to President Karzai's very public criticism of U.S. led military operations,

public opinion two in Afghanistan, where--from where I each just returned and where Afghans are wondering and many are worrying about where this is heading.

So where is it going? We have an excellent panel here today to help us discuss the way ahead. Shaida Abdali has come from Afghanistan. He's the Deputy National Security Advisor. He's the Special Assistant to the President, a president famous for among other things, never taking a day off. So Shaida is spending his one holiday of the year here at the Brussels Forum, so please make him feel that it's a bit of a holiday.

Mr. Shaida Mohammad Abdali: Thank you.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: He also took part in the resistance against the Taliban between 1996 and 2001 and now is part of those efforts to bring the Taliban to the table. That's how Ambassador Mark Grossman spends a lot of his time too. He was dragged out of retirement, out of many distinguished years as a career Ambassador. Since 2011, he has been the U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan. And if

that wasn't enough, two very--very--or a very challenging year in the last year since he took over the job. He's also been trying to fashion a regional structure to resolve the Afghan crisis and to bring about that lesser known, but still important surge called the diplomatic surge.

Speaking of a diplomatic surge, a man who's in a surge all of his own, Swedish Foreign Minister, Carl Bildt. He has been the foreign minister since 2006, a very distinguished international career. And he's also just back from Afghanistan and from Pakistan and, in fact, in Kabul. What did he do? Among other things, he inaugurated the new Swedish Embassy in Kabul. So what are the Swedes telling us? "What, me, worry? Endgame? We're not going anywhere." Well, let's see where things are going.

In addition, of course, there's all of you. We want to bring you into the discussion. I see a very--a lot of familiar--familiar faces who know a lot about Afghanistan. If at all possible for this discussion--

‘cause this is a discussion that matters. It is about an issue that has huge consequences, not just for the region, but in many capitols.

We’re going to go through a series of topics: the Taliban, the military side, the politics of the relationship, the regional dimension. So I may, when we’re in these discussions about particular parts of the issue, say, “Does anyone have a question about, for example, the Taliban?” and try to bring you in. Toward the end, we’ll have a broader discussion. If you have a specific issue; be it about drugs, woman rights, human rights in general, we can open the conversation, but we’re trying to keep it flow in--in a--in a direction, if at all possible, but let’s begin with our panel.

Now, protocol would say--and I’m not a diplomat, so I have to work very hard at trying to understand diplomacy. Dip--diplomacy would say, if I got my rule book, that the foreign minister should begin, but the protocol, perhaps, of the rest of us, who aren’t diplomats, is, “Well, we’re talking about Afghanistan,

so we should allow our guests from Afghanistan to begin," but to each you, let us set the stage.

If 2014 is a date that is seared in the minds of many of us, if it is, indeed, an Endgame, how do you see the next two years--the goal? And what is it that keeps you up at night? What is the thing that worries you the most in terms of it could up end this process? Shaida Abdali?

Mr. Shaida Mohammad Abdali: Thank you. Thank you, Lyse. And also thank--I thank Jamie for facilitating some of the days to spend in this beautiful city. I'll begin by--by having some comments on the very topic--the Endgame. When I looked at this topic, of course, it reminded me many experiences of the past. And I wondered as--as if this is a game abandoning Afghanistan or this means something else. So I thought that I would rather suggest that we are not seeking the Endgame, but we are basically seeking the transformation of the game that we have began.

So you know of the preparation for 2014 and beyond that. So we--we don't want 2014 to be the endgame, but we would like to see the continuity. We should not repeat the past. We should look for connectivity and--and try to not see Afghanistan coming back in the form it was there in 2001. In other to achieve--achieve a successful 2014 objective, our success depends on the success of the transition process that we have ongoing right now until 2014.

I--I will be with--with good news of the process so far very successful. By now, we--our forces--or national forces are--are responsible for the 50 percent of the afghan population. We are closer to the third trench of transition process, again, some 15 providences. All I would like to say is that we are proving that we are or we can take the responsibility. The transition process so far we have had in--in almost half of the population in terms of about--in--in half of the country in terms of population, we are proving that we are there with ability to--to be responsible.

So I hope that we will continue with the pace of the success that we have so far up to 2014, so that we complete the process with the same speed, with the same quality. So that we begin the transformation process--the transformation phase of the game that we have begun.

On your next question, as to what would worry us, our shared objective should be in--in very sh--short sentence: A responsibility of withdrawal based on a responsible takeover. A lack of that would be a worry for us. I hope we will not see that point beyond 2014.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: And just be--and because you just mentioned if at the beginning about abandoning Afghanistan, is that something that worries you--worries your team, Shaida, that the West--that your allies are going to abandon you?

Mr. Shaida Mohammad Abdali: Well, we are a wounded country. And you have to expect Afghans, having been through experiences of abandonance, say these things. Therefore, we--given the experience of the past, we

ponder into the so-called games that are spoken about, that we will not face again the same destiny. So I hope we have learned the lesson. I hope this will be enough.

We are in a global world, as was said yesterday, that we are not g--you know, in a global world in terms of economy. We are in a global world in terms of security as well. Therefore, a peaceful, stable Afghanistan means a peaceful, stable world. That should be the norm of looking at each country and trying to make that country peaceful and stable.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Good. From Mr. Bildt?

The Hon. Carl Bildt: Well, first, the endgame rhetoric, I think is first wrong, and secondly, dangerous. It is wrong for a fairly obvious reason. I mean, games never end. There are changes. It’s gonna be an ongoing game. History doesn’t end either. It will go on. And the outcome of the continuation of the game is gonna be of quite substantial importance to all of us. I am, if you look at the period up until 2014, I am less worried about the security transition. There will

be hiccoughs, there will be problems, that's the way the world is, but I think this will be basically okay. What I'm worried about is the period thereafter and primarily the political transition. 2014 is going to be the end of the period of President Karzai. There should be a new president of Afghanistan elected. And those of us who went through the drama of the 2009 election know that this is not going to be an easy thing. And there is going to be even more difficulties in arranging an election that produces an outcome that is broadly accepted by not each and everyone necessarily but by all of the significant sectors of Afghan society.

If that is successful, then we have a successful political transition. If that doesn't work, then we could have a political implosion and a security implosion with profound (unintelligible) regional consequences. I'm also worried about the--apart from the political sustainability, about the fiscal sustainability. Afghanistan, the state of Afghanistan, has never been self-supporting and self-sustaining if

you look at history. It's always been subsidized by someone or -- I mean, one or the other outside power. It today, faces a financing gap of roughly 25 percent of GDP. I mean, it has an enormous army that is impossible to finance, but not only out of its own revenues, but not only out of everything else.

If we don't find a solution for the fiscal sustainability, then you'll have a collapse of political credibility of the Afghan state and then we are back to basics. And third factor, of course, and we might come into that, is that regional framework. Without that particular regional framework, it will never work and here there's a lot of sort of reconciliation work that needs to be done, that Pakistanis versus the (unintelligible) alliance, I think, is key.

The Iranians are, for reasons of geography, culture, history, whatever, they're an essential part of this which brings us into quite a number of other problems. So the Central Asians, the Pakistanis, the

Iranians, Central Asians must also be part of that, so we must have the regional sustainability as well. All of these things, I think, are more important and more critical than the security transition which, as a matter of fact, might be the least complicated of the issues that we are facing.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: And since you, as the Swedish foreign minister mentioned, the fiscal sustainability, when you get together with your counterparts from other European nations, do you say well look, Egypt needs money, Libya needs money, can we really keep affording to subsidize Afghanistan?

The Hon. Carl Bildt: Well, I wouldn't say subsi-- well, yeah. Well, subsidize is subsidize. I mean, we have now made, from the Swedish point of view, Afghan is the second largest recipient of Swedish official development assistance and we are increasing it quite substantially because we think it's also very important to send the message that yeah, we are doing the draw-down of our military forces and that's got to be

completed by summer 2014 or something like that. I want it to be completed well in advance of the political transition period so that that is not sort of disturbed by these particular things.

But, at the same time, very clearly sending the message to the people of Afghanistan, we are not abandoning you. We're going to be there to help in different ways and I think it's exceedingly important that we all send that particular message. Long-term, I mean, some people are saying it was a mistake to go massively into Afghanistan. You hear elements of that in the debate. Look at it in a broadly historical perspective. The big mistake we've done is where we have abandoned the place because it's when it's abandoned, then sooner or later it comes back to haunt us the one way or another.

So we should send that message for the sake of Afghanistan, but also for the sake of ourselves and what might happen in the future. This is the country in between Central Asia and South Asia and what happens in

Afghanistan will have a profound influence on Central Asia, on countries like Pakistan with all if its problems, on relationship between Pakistan and India on the future of South Asia. So it's not an irrelevant place up in the mountains. It's fairly relevant to our global future.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Ambassador Grossman.

The Hon. Marc Grossman: Good, well thank you very much and thank all of you for being here today. Lyse, I think you set the framework extremely well, which is to say, here's this very important issue; what next? I don't think it will surprise anybody in this room that I'd like to first of all join both the members of the panel in saying this question is it's not an endgame. I think the endgame is, as Minister Bildt said, making this an endgame is a very dangerous thing. And why is that a dangerous thing? Exactly as Mr. Bildt has said, it's because there's a history here, and a history of making it an endgame has brought us back and back and back to Afghanistan.

When you say how do you see the situation at the moment, I was thinking a little bit about sitting here a year ago, which was about two or three weeks after I got this job, trying to remember what I was supposed to say and how I was supposed to say it. But I think, at the time, we were really focused on three things that I think are worth returning to at the beginning of this conversation.

First, we were focused, as you recall, on making sure that the military effort in Afghanistan is a success and that military effort has to succeed and has to continue, it has the broad support of many, I think, around many countries represented in this room and certainly the ISF countries. But it's something that has to continue. Second, we also remember that we were trying to figure out how we would expand the civilian effort in Afghanistan. More focus on government, more focus on the economy, more focus on development. And third, we had just begun to consider the question of whether it was possible not to create this diplomatic

surge you kindly referred to, which is to say is it possible to find a way to support an Afghan peace process? Can Afghans find a way to talk to other Afghans about the future of Afghanistan?

If you look back at all three, I think the report is that the military effort has been a continuing success, that the civilian effort has continued at great cost, as the foreign minister said, to many countries around the world, has continued to bring progress. And third, we have begun this effort, both on the regional basis and on the diplomatic basis, to see if we can't create a political process to bring peace to Afghanistan.

The only thing that I would say is that if you look at the events over the past years, and just a series of cities and they're worth remembering: Lisbon, 2010, set out the 2014 deadline and I must say, having had nothing to do with the Lisbon meeting, this is a very wise and a very foresighted decision, because if you think now, if we'd be having this conversation without

Lisbon, this would be much, much, much more difficult because the transition exists, it goes forward along Lisbon.

But think of the other cities. Istanbul where the neighbors and near neighbors got together with Afghanistan to talk about the future. Bonn, a very important meeting to talk about why this isn't an endgame; Chicago here in May, where we'll deal with some of the security issues in Bonn; Tokyo in July, to deal with some of the economic and civilian issues that came from Bonn.

So if you think about Lisbon gets you to 2014, but every other one of that list of cities takes you beyond 2014 to the transformational decade, so it's not, I believe, an endgame. You ask me what it is that keeps me up at night, what keeps me up at night is that these strands of our policy, military, civilian, transition, enduring presence, diplomatic, they tend often to kind of run down their own channels. And what we need to do, I think, is a better job of bringing them all together

so they support one another and are mutually reinforcing.

I think that's the next great intellectual and political challenge here as we go forward as an international community.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Well, Mr. Grossman, you mentioned events, and of course it brings to mind that great phrase by Harold McMillan, "events my dear boy, events." And what were the events of recent weeks. Of course, the inadvertent burning of the Holy Quran at a US military base, the massacre of 16 Afghan civilians, they impose strains on the relationship, they lead to calls in the United States in response to President Karzai's very, very critical remark saying well let's pull out our troops now. Does that worry you? How many events can the relationship sustain and we're not talking about Lisbon and Bonn.

The Hon. Marc Grossman: Fair enough. A fair question. Events, of course, are part of all of our lives. The issue about events is, is whether you allow

them to bounce you off kind of our basic vision, and the basic vision here is Lisbon, the basic vision here is a diplomatic way to support an Afghan peace process. The long-term vision is a secure, stable and prosperous Afghanistan inside of a secure, stable, prosperous region. So the events that you talk about, they're terrible, no question about it. But the issue is, do the three of us, or anybody else who has this responsibility, allow them to bounce you off that basic, fundamental path. And so far, not. When you talk about President Karzai's response, and of course, it's to our Afghan friend to really talk about that, but from my perspective, he has to react to how people feel in his country. But if you'll notice what happens after President Obama called him, what did he say? Lisbon, Lisbon, Lisbon. Lisbon is the way forward here and the plan we developed in 2014, or others developed and I support, in 2014 that's the answer to this question.

So events are really important, but the big ideas from Lisbon and some of these other conferences and promotions are also extremely important.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Shaida, do those ends, those incidents that create such anger in the palace where you work among Afghan, does that make it difficult to sustain this very crucial set of relationships?

Mr. Shaida Mohammad Abdali: Well, it was really a painful incident, very painful and unfortunate. It's a live issue. We may be different in other aspects of life, but we're equal in terms of being a human being. I think anyone in the world will get the same hurt feeling. In Islam, we consider the loss of one life as the loss of the entire humanity. Therefore, based on that faith, we will not only get hurt when we see the loss of Afghans, but loss of life, this way, anywhere in the world would get as the same feeling as we had the feeling on Afghan families.

Therefore, I hope that we will not see such instance in the future.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: But when the president calls it the end of the rope, saying that these--

Mr. Shaida Mohammad Abdali: Well, I mean, let's put ourselves in the shoes of the president. He's the protector of the nation. He's the responsible man. You were there on the day when the families were dead and you saw the people yelling at him. They were asking for a response. What would you expect from the person being responsible for the nation, for their security and safety? So it's a natural, you know, thing to be reactive. When I look, myself, at the babies, six months old, and I immediately brought my own son, six months old, and put that exactly the same feeling in my mind, had the same hurt feeling. Therefore, it's natural to be angry at the loss of life, wherever it is. I hope we will do everything possible to prevent such incidents in order to have a stable relationship between Afghanistan and the rest of the world.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Carl Bildt, when there is one sadly, a series of incidents, as Leon Panetta calls it,

the hell of war, not the first incident, not likely to be the last, and then there is this very public exchange, very acrimonious exchanges, does it actually color the view in Europe about continuing on, continuing to support?

The Hon. Carl Bildt: It could, but I think, so far, hasn't really. I think the most unfortunate incident in Kandahar, with the U.S. soldier who killed 16, I think that should be taken away from the issue of the Afghan war. We've had a number of such incidents, in -- school shootings, we had the horror in Norway. It's part of that context rather, that you should look at that.

What has been possible and I think that has been a success story in Afghanistan during the last few years is to bring down the number of civilian casualties. I mean, more people are being killed by IED's and things like that, but the so-called collateral damage, civilian deaths that were in fairly high numbers. And I do think that the military should have done that somewhat better earlier, but I do think that has been a

sea change in the way in which the international forces have been operating in the last two years or something like that. That has been very, very important also for the sustainability of the force inside Afghanistan and in our respective countries.

That being said, going back to what we said about the security transition, is it a wise decision not, I think it is a wise decision because at the end of the day, if it's 130,000, 140,000 soldiers at the moment--I don't know--but I mean, if this is one of the tenth poorest countries of the world, and if you have this massive, and it is truly massive, international presence year after year after year, it distorts a society. We risk overstaying our welcome. We've done a great job there. I think the security structure of Afghanistan should be able to take care of it. I think leaving or doing the security transition is the only way to issue some sort of success. Staying would, on the same numbers and in the same way, would risk far more of a reaction and far more instability.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: I just want to get a sense of what the feeling in the room is. Just with a show of hands, how many here in this room are worried, deeply, deeply worried about the next two years and are not at all convinced that this very, call it an endgame, call it two critical years, is not really going to work out really well? Just a show of hands. How many of you are really, really worried. Who's a better mathematician than me? Who's (unintelligible)? I think that's sort of a majority.

I'm just going to move it on just to a series of comments on some issues. Then I'm going to bring in the audience. Let's start with the Taliban talks. This is a very important part. We've had some comments on the military side. Carl says he thinks it's going to go roughly, smoothly, but how smoothly will the Taliban process--Amb. Grossman, so U.S. now, which is talking to some Taliban representatives, how would you describe those talks now? They've been suspended according to their last statement.

The Hon. Marc Grossman: Um-hum.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: What would be the word, preliminary, fragile? How would you describe them and what the goal is?

The Hon. Marc Grossman: Well, let me start with the goal first 'cause that's--no, I mean, that's the most important thing.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Yeah, yeah.

The Hon. Marc Grossman: The goal is only one. And the goal of any conversations that we've had with the Taliban is simply to try to open the door for Afghans to pursue an Afghan peace process. There is no other purpose for us talking to the Taliban. We have had--over the period in a number of preliminary contacts, as you said, they've been suspended. We'd like to get back into them, Secretary Clinton said the other day with Foreign Minister Rasul. But the most important thing is there's only one reason to have them, and that's to open the door for an Afghan peace process. And National Security adviser and I have talked a lot about this.

I've talked a lot about it with President Karzai. We've kept the government of Afghanistan not just informed, but they've been our full partners in here.

Second, I think it's also important to know that this is not the only place where people talk to the Taliban. As President Karzai and others have said, there are lots of conversations among Afghans about this, and that'll go forward in the future. But our purpose is a simple and single one: Open the door for an Afghan peace process.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: What would you--would you call--'cause sometimes in the press, they're called peace talks. Other people call them confidence building measures. When you go and talk to representatives, how do you see them? What phase are you at?

The Hon. Marc Grossman: We're simply at the phase of trying to open the door for Afghans to have a peace process. That's all that--that's all this is about.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: So you're not talking--you're talking prisoners, not politics?

The Hon. Marc Grossman: Well, we're talking about anything that will open this door.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Shaida Abdali, are you--I know there are talks, Afghan-to-Afghan talks as well going on. Are you the structure that is now slowly evolving? There are some Afghan concerns about it. President Karzai said that it should be Afghans--it should Afghan-led already.

Mr. Shaida Mohammad Abdali: Well, first of all, let me start by saying that this problem came through a process, a process of years. And this will take another years, in terms of the process, to get it solved. Therefore, we had begun the process years ago. And this will take years, no doubt about it. Therefore, we should not lose our hope in terms of getting the goal, which is to get them reconciled, reintegrated, and be part of the Afghan society. So this is an ongoing effort. But I must emphasize here that this should be genuinely Afghan-led.

There's one Afghan legitimate government. Afghanistan should not only be a party to these talks but a leader because the success depends on full and complete Afghan leadership and ownership of the peace process. And we are working together with our U.S. friends to make that happen. And we made--we have made a lot of progress on this front. We have contacts at different levels. The purpose I'm trying to convey here is that sometime we say statements coming in the name of the Taliban. We should not be driven by individual statements coming from here and there. We have very, you know, much higher optimism compared to the past, in terms of the success that we're envisioning out of the effort that we began together (unintelligible) and, of course, a recent visit to Pakistan. We're waiting for the result of all what we have agreed upon in practice.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: But are you with all--especially with the Afghan-to-Afghan discussion, contacts, conversations, are you convinced that there is a Taliban, a coherent Taliban all of which want to engage

in talks? You had the assassination of Burhanuddin Rabbani, the head of the High Peace Council, the assassination of John Muhammad, spectacular attacks in Kabul. Is it a divided Taliban movement? Or is it a movement playing for time with these talks?

Mr. Shaida Mohammad Abdali: Well, there is no doubt about this splintered movement. It's not a cohesive movement. That's why I earlier said that we should not be driven to conclusion by individual statements. There is division among the Taliban. What we should do is to focus on the real Taliban who matter in the peace process. So I'm hopeful that we are getting closer to the real Taliban in terms of a negotiation.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Carl Bildt, there are voices in Afghanistan, voices outside of Afghanistan saying why are you investing so much energy in talking to the Taliban? They should be defeated or they shouldn't be brought to the table. What is your perspective on this part of this--of the issue?

The Hon. Carl Bildt: I think, of course, it's crucial for the future of the country that they're brought into the political process at one point in time, and I'm quite convinced that will happen. Then we know from--and I'm in the fortunate position that I don't know anything about these talks, which means that I can talk about them, which Marc can't, but if we look at other similar examples, be that the IRA, be that the ETA, be that the PKK ongoing story. We know this takes quite some time. And we should not expect anything dramatic in the short perspective.

The solution to the problems that we have at the moment in Afghanistan is not in these talks. My hunch would be that the real game, if I use that word, starts after the political transition. That's got to be what happens after the presidential elections, after they have seen that there's a stable transition to new Afghan leadership, that's when the real Afghan--Afghan talks of reconciliation and reintegration sets in. Then they're going to be also some preliminaries of--for the

period up until, say, 2015. And then we'll see if it works, and it depends on the stability that we can create for the Afghan political structures and on the regional setting that he created. That creates the framework. Then it will be possible. Everything else is preliminaries.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Bildt.

The Hon. Carl Bildt: Just to say, first of all, I appreciate the point about the region 'cause it's--no, it's very important. This secure, stable, prosperous Afghanistan inside of a secure, stable, prosperous region has a huge impact on the possibilities of reconciliation.

But I also want to just emphasize the point that Mr. Abdali made, which is to say that the question of the Taliban is that it's very important also, just as he said, to have a long perspective, but also to have some principles here. And those principles are that, at the end, the Taliban have to do certain things. They have to break with al-Qaida. They have to end this

violence, and they have to be prepared to live in the constitution of Afghanistan that respects the rights of women and minorities, that respects the sanctity of the individual. And so how well we've got--sometimes get caught up in the tactics of this, it's very important to go back to first principles exactly as he did, and I think they're worth repeating.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Does anyone in the audience have a question about the Taliban? We're going to go through a number of talks. If you want to ask something about the Taliban--Trudy, you--let's get the --yeah, please use the microphones.

Ms. Trudy Rubin: If those principles that you just expressed, Marc Grossman, are that the Taliban should live within constitutional principles, what leverage do we have other than the fact that there are still troops on the ground? And, if it is understood that those troops are leaving, especially if there is much speculation, given statements in Washington, that they will leave even more quickly, doesn't that undermine

the possibility of your negotiation since--to repeat something we've all heard a million times--we've got the watches, they've got the time? Is it too soon to ask just another quick thing?

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Real quick--yeah, no. I'm just going to try it. Otherwise we go all over the place, which, of course, is not too bad as well.

Unidentified Panelist: Okay. Okay. Do we want to do one--do you want it answered one at a time?

Ms. Lyse Doucet: But just--just let's just get what this lady here--this one in the front, yes.

Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez: Thank you. I'm Loretta Sanchez. I sit on the Armed Services Committee in the Congress. And--

Ms. Lyse Doucet: There you go. You could answer the question actually.

Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez: Well, I would have a lot to say about what you all are saying up there, but this has to--'cause I don't believe any of it, quite frankly, but that's another thing.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: There you go, gentlemen.

The Hon. Marc Grossman: Congresswoman Sanchez represents my father, so I--this is all sort of complicated here California.

Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez: My question to the--about the Taliban is--also has to do with the Northern Alliance. The Northern Alliance probably represents between 50 and 60 percent of the Afghan people. They've been left out of this. They feel left out of this. They fought with our Special Forces against the Taliban. They have said that they will not accept something that--a deal that has to do with the Taliban unless they are also at the table and there's negotiation with them. We have been very reticent to do that, in particular our own State Department. Eight percent of the resources that have been put into Afghanistan from these countries, if you will, have gone to places other than those represented by the Northern Alliance. Squeaky wheel gets the oil. And so, you know, how do you really expect that, in the short term of less than

18 months, you're really going to get this all together in order for us to leave?

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Okay. Please tell that to Marc's father, too. And one last--three for three, please.

Congressman Michael Turner: Thank you. I'm Congressman Mike Turner from Ohio. I similarly serve in the armed service committee and the--

Ms. Lyse Doucet: It's not deliberate, Marc, I promise you.

Congressman Michael Turner: One of the pictures that are being shown up behind us here is a field of poppies. And every time I sit through a discussion on Afghanistan, I'm always saddened that we don't hear enough about tackling the drug trade. If you look at the period from 2006 through 2010, the poppy production in Afghanistan virtually doubled over the historical levels of production in Afghanistan.

Most recently, we've had an effect in lowering it. Everyone acknowledges--Petraeus, Karzai, everyone acknowledges that the drug trade feeds both corruption

in Afghanistan, instability and also the Taliban. It goes right to the issue of being able to defund, if you will, your opponent. There are a number of ways in which it can be addressed and is being--which it is being addressed. My concern goes as we look to the process of handing over to Afghanistan Security Forces the responsibilities of the Afghanistan territory, to what extent will the efforts be able to be continued to tackle the drug trade? And also, why isn't this a more prominent issue as you look to the summit in Chicago?

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Okay. So you changed the topic, but that's okay. We'll allow you because you're American representative. Do you want to take the first remark about will the--your basically playing for time?

The Hon. Marc Grossman: Yeah, sure, I'd be glad to.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Yes. Yes.

The Hon. Marc Grossman: Then perhaps I'll make a couple comments to Representative Sanchez, although others may want to as well.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Yes. Shaida.

The Hon. Marc Grossman: For Trudy, I think that, you know, this is a huge question of so why do they want to talk to us? Why would they like to talk to the Afghans? I'd say three things: one is is that Lisbon, and the Lisbon accord and the Lisbon agreement says that there's going to be a substantial number of forces there till 2014. And so I think the premise of your question to say, well, we're hearing in Washington, D.C. that people are going to leave early, I don't think that's right.

One of the things that's been very clear, I think, over the past two weeks--and will be extremely clear between now and Chicago--is that Lisbon remains the policy and that people are not going to abandon that policy. It's hugely important. As I said in my introduction, I can't imagine how we'd be having this conversation today without Lisbon.

Second, it's extremely important. And here I know our colleagues who serve in Congress, especially in the Armed Services Committee are--also know that we're

trying very hard with the government of Afghanistan to complete the job of having a strategic partnership document, to define the relationship between Afghanistan and the United States after 2014. And, obviously, the government of Afghanistan will make its own decisions. But I believe that our objective is to have inside of that SPD the space for U.S. forces--some number of U.S. forces agreed with the Afghans to be in Afghanistan after 2014. That's a very important message, first of all, to the Afghan population, if you allow me, Representative, to the whole Afghan population, including those in the Northern Alliance, to the Taliban, to Pakistan, to the region. And so if the people of the Taliban believe that the reason that they should kind of keep talking to us, no meaning because all they have to do is wait, won't be any forces there after 2014, I think that's wrong.

Third, again, I go back to this question of the region. I believe that you have to have some sort of longer term vision here to show people what life could

be like. And that's not just people who are currently in Afghanistan, but currently people who are in the insurgency against Afghanistan. And so I believe that this regional aspect of this, more economic development, a connection to Central Asian, South Asian economies, the regional aspect of this is extremely important to the negotiation itself. Now, that may be my perspective. You might consider that naive, but in this kind of effort we're making, we're trying to show a whole picture here of what the future might be like. You know, I hoped that representatives of the Taliban would read very carefully both the Istanbul document and the one from Bonn because both those documents tell what life could be like if they were prepared, as Mr. Abdali said, to be part of this larger effort.

To the point that Representative Sanchez made--it's hugely important, obviously. Number one, I just want to say to you that we've not pursued any of these conversations, first of all, without a conversation with the Afghan government, and certainly through our

embassy out of the broadest possible context that we've tried to make inside of Afghan society.

One of the things that I learned--as I said, I was here exactly a year ago. One of the things I've learned over this past year is that reconciliation is not about the government of Afghanistan reconciling with the insurgents. It's about a reconciliation inside of all of Afghan society. And that means the various political groups. It means the various ethnic groups. It means that women, civil society, entrepreneurs, young people, all of them need to take part in this conversation about reconciliation. And so the idea that this could be done with a government, with one group of people inside some room and that it would hold, I don't think it's possible. Not a chance. And so this has to be a reconciliation inside of Afghan society.

So we've substantially, through our wonderful embassy in Afghanistan, kind of stepped up or contacts with all kinds of people in Afghanistan to talk about reconciliation. If the deputy national security advisor

would allow me, one of our recommendations in this conversation about reconciliation is to increase the participation of all kinds of people, in the High Peace Council, for example, in this conversation.

So for precisely, we don't sort of fall into this trap of thinking that we could do this somehow on our own or even just with the government of Afghanistan.

Finally, the final point you made, if you'd allow me, you know, the final sentence to say how could I possibly think we could do this in 18 months so we could get out, I think the whole purpose, first of all, as our friend said, isn't going to happen in 18 months. A longer process than that. And secondly, its purpose is not to get out, it's the purpose to set the stage for the transformational decade after 2014 so that there's actually some different vision of how Afghans can live their lives. I know Foreign Minister Bildt was very interested in talking about drugs, so (unintelligible) drone on.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Yes. So we bring in Shaida Abdali

here to address the comments about the northern alliance and Afghans in general.

Mr. Shaida Mohammad Abdali: Well, we are one country and a united nation. But then, welcome to democracy, you know, you have people talking of this nature, not only in Afghanistan but all over the world. We have national mechanisms in Afghanistan that should have the legitimate status for us. We have the High Peace Council comprised of all Afghans from all political, you know, elite and the groups that we have in Afghanistan.

Therefore, yes, we respect opinion of the people coming in the context of respecting democratic values. But we have enough national institutions that gives legitimacy of our mission to pursue the peace process. The High Peace Council, the Grand Loya Jirga that recently was held in Kabul, unanimously supported the pursuit of peace talks with the Taliban. Therefore, that has to be kept in our minds that we should continue the peace process because we have a legitimate

recommendation and the endorsement of our national institutions.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Carl Bildt, I know with the drugs (unintelligible) was an issue, you came into the panel wanting to talk about it. Yeah.

The Hon. Carl Bildt: Well, the drugs, yes, I completely agree with that. That's one of their sort of hidden or often forgotten very major issues. And it might be that it concerns us Europeans somewhat more. It does concern the Russians quite a lot. It concerns the Iranians, concerns the Pakistanis, because these are the areas that's always sort of completely undermined--not completely but fundamentally undermined by the drug trade.

Look at what's happening in Mexico and Central America, if you look at it from a U.S. perspective. And say, if we don't get the Afghan drug thing under control in 10 years time, we'll have the same thing happening, say, in Central Asia, and that will have profound consequences for global instability.

Now, at the moment, we are, I wouldn't say losing, but things are going backward. Drug production is increasing all over Afghanistan. Why is that? Well, it's a question of the price correlation to a very large extent. We were making progress until a couple of years go, a large extent due to the fact that world food prices were going up. So the correlation between growing wheat and growing poppies was one to two. And then we could conceivably say to the Afghan farmers, do the wheat thing instead of the poppy thing.

Now, for a number of reasons, the correlation is 1 to 11. And then it becomes substantially more difficult to go out to the Afghan farmer and say, "Do the wheat instead of the poppies." Because the poppies are very easy to grow and extremely profitable and there are lots of people, all of them in different structures in Afghanistan, in Central Asia, in Balochistan, who make a lot of money on this.

But we do have international structures. We have something called the Paris Pact. We had a ministerial

meeting in Vienna a month ago and we were there substantially from the European side, from the Russian side, from the Afghan side, from the U.N. side and trying to devise a strategy that's going to work for the duration. But at the moment, the trends are not very good. Afghanistan--for all of the problems of the Afghanistan economy, they have a 90 percent global market share in opium and that's a problem for the world and a problem for Afghanistan.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Okay. So two more hands. If this is about the Taliban, I'll take them now. If it's more general, I'll leave them to a later section. So the gentleman here and then (unintelligible) did you want to talk about--'cause we're going to move to regional cooperation in a second.

Unidentified Panalist: Right. This is--

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Do you want to wait then? So we'll take this last question and then--

Stephen Beigun: Steve Beigun, Ford Motor Company. Mark, I understand the state you're trying to create

with negotiations, but I still don't see where the incentives are for the Taliban. I was wondering if you could bore down a little bit more because, classically, it's the sense that they can't achieve on the battlefield what brings rebellions to the table. Carl talked about ETA, talked about IRA, you can do PLO, they know they couldn't achieve in the battlefield, so they came to the table. At least the big elements do. What's their incentive? And, Mr. Abdali, what can the Afghan government give to the Taliban? I understand that the negotiation is to create something for all Afghans. But what is it the Afghan government can give to the Taliban that they don't believe they can achieve otherwise on the battlefield?

And, Carl, I know we're going to get into regional but in this case, Taliban control of Afghanistan is proxy Pakistani control, Pakistan potentially. It'll be unruly but it's proxy. What's the incentive for Pakistan to not bide its time to wait until Taliban control is a possibility?

Ms. Lyse Doucet: I think that's a Ford kind of question. You build the whole car in one question. Thank you very much.

The Hon. Carl Bildt: Yeah, Steve, first of all, thank you very much. I'd say first, that I believe that the military effort that we have made, not just the United States but our friends, our allies and the Afghans, very much, set the conditions for any of the conversations that I've been able to have, and without that, we wouldn't be any place.

And so just as I said to Trudy, I think that the continuation of this military effort is extremely important to set the further conditions for an Afghan peace process. Let me just repeat that from our perspective, our job in this is to do only one thing. Not to negotiation the future, not to negotiate future Afghanistan, but to open the door for Afghans to have a peace process about their future. But I believe that the military aspect of this, the military campaign has brought us to this place. And if there's any

possibility of making success in the future, it's to continue to focus on the military effort.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Shaida Abdali?

Mr. Shaida Mohammad Abdali: Well, we are all principles. You know those principles and it's not about the share of power with the Taliban. It is the principle that every nation would pursue, that is to allow its nationals to be part of national society, to be part of the political process. We have all principles that Afghanistan is their country. They have every right to be equal to every other Afghan struggling for all aspects of life.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: But they have to accept the Constitution. That's also a principle?

Mr. Shaida Mohammad Abdali: Well, of course. Afghanistan's constitution has come through a national gathering it is not a constitution of a few individuals' writing, this is a constitution that came through the entire nation. Therefore, if this is a democratic value, we should go by the majority. If the

whole nation has introduced a constitution and adopted the constitution, then every Afghan has the obligation to accept that constitution.

If someone has a suggestion to bring some change to the constitution, they have every right as well to raise that issue. But then you have a mechanism there, and those mechanisms have to be implemented in order to see that kind of change to the constitution.

So anyone is most welcome to come and talk about the constitution and the problems in the constitution, but that change has to come through our national institutions. That is the Afghan constitution that has provisioned the Afghan (unintelligible) as well. The Jirga.

The Hon. Carl Bildt: I think Pakistan has a profound interest in stability in Afghanistan. If Pakistan were to pursue, I'm not saying they're doing it, but if they were to pursue in the past 20-40 framework of Taliban only or say a Pashtun-only policy, I think that would risk civil war in Afghanistan. A

civil war in Afghanistan would obviously be bad for Afghanistan but I think it would be absolute disaster for Pakistan.

Because the Taliban will not be able to win. The ex-northern alliance is today a fairly--much stronger than it was in the past, if we look at it in these particular terms. What will happen then is that we will, in all probability, have a Jihadist mobilization in Pakistan with young people streaming from the Madrasas, of the Punjab into the Pashtun south of Afghanistan to fight. That's going to be repetition of the disastrous 1980s for Pakistan and we will be faced with both an Afghanistan that is very problematic, but further down the road, with a Pakistan 200 million people with nuclear weapons. That is profoundly unstable, and then we are really entering into a somewhat problematic period.

But, I mean, Pakistan does understand that, the leadership. And I think one of the things that they--two things I would recommend. Both a dialog between

Islamabad and, say, Mazar Sharif or the north, they must establish confidence. And then Islamabad, New Delhi, should not be forgotten, sort of maneuvering between India and Pakistan and Afghanistan is also profoundly destabilizing, potentially.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Yes. Good. Now, you've brought us into, I think what should be our next discussion, because everyone has mentioned in some way the regional dimension of this. But I think your question is noted because I think there is a lot of skepticism about whether the Taliban have any incentive at all to be talking when they know the bulk of the troops are going to leave.

But then there is the other side of it, which is that there is no way forward other than to try to talk to them. And I think there is a broad agreement across Afghan society that you have to at least try to begin this process, as difficult and as complicated as it is.

Carl mentioned some of the dilemmas and some of the things which should be done in terms of Pakistan.

Everyone knows that there can't be peace in Afghanistan unless the neighbors are somehow engaged in it. Let me turn to you, Shaida, in terms of President Karzai has, from almost since the beginning, 11 years ago, talked about the sanctuaries in Pakistan, what the Pakistanis have had to do, had recent meetings in Islamabad. Do you feel there is more cooperation that you're on the same board, the same game, if you like, or is there still a double game?

Mr. Shaida Mohammad Abdali: Well, first of all, I would like to say that it's no longer only Afghanistan that should be talked about when it's the issue of security in the region. It is equally Pakistan, as well. Is the issue of Pakistan and Afghanistan the same? We suffer, they will suffer. They'll probably suffer more than us in the future. Therefore, we see signs of this realization that you cannot keep the snake in your backyard forever without getting you bited, you know, bitten by the snake.

So we see the realization that if Afghanistan

suffers, they will suffer, too. This realization has brought some changes in certain circles in the Pakistan society. We hope that they will speed up on looking at Afghanistan instability as theirs, eventually. That will make Afghanistan safe and then save Pakistan, as well.

So we see some changes but it's too early to conclude as to what will be the outcome of our engagements with our Pakistani brothers. We had a recent visit to Pakistan. We had some substantive issues raised and we sensed the realization, as I mentioned earlier, of the problem as common to both. We hope that they will continue with this realization and take some practical steps to make both countries safe.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: And what about Iran, which, as you know, is also accused of having its own proxies and having its own interests in Afghanistan? India. India and Pakistan are accused of having a proxy war in Afghanistan. And then, of course, China, as well. I mean, it's a regional issue. Are there--we often focus

on Pakistan but are there other issues? Is the whole regional dynamic getting better or worse?

Mr. Shaida Mohammad Abdali: Well, the fact of Afghanistan as an instable country is because of the region. That's where--

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Because of the region?

Mr. Shaida Mohammad Abdali: --Afghanistan's suffering began.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Because of the region?

Mr. Shaida Mohammad Abdali: Because of the region. To be very straightforward. We are hoping that if Afghanistan will not continue to be a point of rivalry anymore in the region. We hope Afghanistan will be the center of cooperation, not only of the region but the region and the rest of the world.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: As the U.S. military says, hope is not a strategy. Is there the facts on the ground to sustain that?

Mr. Shaida Mohammad Abdali: As I said earlier, the biggest stakeholder in bringing peace to Afghanistan is

Pakistan. But then again I said earlier, if the region that basically has a bigger stake in terms of ensuring peace in Afghanistan, I hope everyone would move toward this pact of considering Afghanistan. Afghanistan's stability is theirs and that will push them hard to be united and common in pursuit of that objective.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Mr. Grossman, what's your observations on this? You've been going to from capital to capital trying to forge some kind of a regional structure as well to this process.

The Hon. Marc Grossman: Well, my observations are very much along those lines. And in fact, if you can take the evolution of the comments we just heard from when Pakistan--when Afghanistan suffers, Pakistan suffers to an evolution where when Afghanistan prospers, Pakistan prospers and vice versa, and I think that's sort of where you have to head here.

So, I'd do two things: One is just refer back, if I could, to what happened in Istanbul last November. What happened in Istanbul last November is that the

neighbors and your neighbors of Afghanistan got together and what did they do? They committed themselves to the kind of future that Mr. Abdali was talking about. And I think as you kind consider who signed that document, China, Russia, India, Pakistan, Iran all signed. And I think there's something profound and important about that. And now the question is how to proceed and go forward. And in Kabul in June, this will be a follow-on effort to them.

Second thing is--and, again, I don't say this as the entire answer to that question. But I keep coming back kind of in my own thinking to the importance of the economics in all of this and to the importance of trade in all of this and the importance of foreign direct investment in all of this. Let me give you an example: First, I think Carl very rightly pointed out India, Pakistan. That's an important part of this. But what's the most successful piece of India-Pakistan relations at the moment? Trade. What's the most interesting thing they're doing together? Well, they're

increasing the trade across the border. Well, that's a very fundamental building block, if you will, to this kind of idea that the region, central Asia, south Asia, not very integrated now could be increasingly integrated. If you think about central Asian economies and south Asian economies working together, who's in the middle of that? Afghanistan and Pakistan. And President Karzai calls this the Afghan roundabout, so that good services, people come up and down.

And when you think about the future of both Afghanistan and Pakistan, what do people need there? They need a job. And they need stable economic development. It can be that in the future of Afghanistan is all about military spending and official development assistance. It has to be some day about the private sector and some day about foreign direct investment. And there are capacities in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. So, I think part of--I don't say the whole thing. But I think part of the focus of

the region ought to be on this capacity for economic integration.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Do you--

The Hon. Carl Bildt: Very much agree. I mean, look at the fundamentals. Afghanistan is at roughly 30 million people. Pakistan, roughly 200 million people. India, roughly a billion people. One of the most expensive economies of the world. History links Kabul, Peshawar, Lahore, and Delhi, the great turning road that united for hundreds and hundreds of years. There is no reason why that should not come back. But it does require some political will in Delhi, in Islamabad and in Kabul. But look at what's been happening in Europe during the last 50 years. It is perfectly achievable, and that would go a long way towards great stability. It's not going to happen before 2014, so to say, but there's no reason why it shouldn't happen.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: One always feels in these sorts of discussions that everything you say is true about perhaps a greater political will, the clear benefits,

economic benefits to all. But below that world is another underworld of not the economic exchanges but the exchanges of smuggling and not the exchanges of diplomat, but the exchanges and the battles between spies--see ISI, RAW, other groups--which, as we know, have played a big part of in the history of Afghanistan. I want to take a few questions in the audience about the regional dimension and then we'll open it up to whatever question you may have about the whole Afghanistan end game. Pervez, you had your hand up first.

Pervez Hoodhboy: (unintelligible) have a microphone?

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Yes, you must have a microphone, unless on the live stream they won't hear you and they should hear you.

Pervez Hoodhboy: Actually, if I may, I'd like to ask two questions.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Pervez Hoodhboy from from--yes, please.

Pervez Hoodhboy: Thank you.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Pakistan.

Pervez Hoodhboy: The first relates to Iran. It is a viscerally anti-Taliban country and yet, as we heard in this room yesterday, attacking Iran is very much on the cards. What would be the impact of that? To my mind, it would be terrible on settling the Afghan issue and, comes 2014, it would complicate things immeasurably. Would you agree on that? That would be my first question.

My second regards the inadequate punishment into American soldiers, NATO soldiers, who have committed crimes in Pakistan and in Afghanistan. Sergeant Robert Bales is one example. We don't know whether he will be punished, but he was certainly whisked out of Afghanistan after he massacred 17 civilians.

We don't know whether the U.S. force will indeed give him a strong enough sentence. And people are already saying that there is no evidence that he actually massacred them, because the forensic evidence

wouldn't be there. But earlier on, we know of Raymond Davis, who was a CIA operator, who shot Pakistanis in cold blood in public and shot one of them in the back through the window of his, through the windshield of his car. He too was whisked out of Pakistan. And incidents of these kind make people very angry, and the consequence of this has been that the Afghan National Army has been shooting Americans and NATO soldiers. What do you make of it?

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Okay. Let's hold that for a minute. And down here question, microphone here and then the gentlemen here.

Harlan Ullman: I'm Harlan Ullman. My question is for Marc Grossman. Marc, you might want to buckle your chinstrap up for a second. As you well know, the future of Afghanistan is really determined by security, economic development and governance but also Pakistan. I am very pessimistic about the governance issue and, of course, the development issue. But in Pakistan, as you know, the parliament has just voted to end all sort

of drone attacks. Their ambassador has been called to Islamabad for discussions. It's going to be a big issue. My question is, why don't we give them a drone capacity and let them get on with it?

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Okay. And the gentleman here.

Gian Giacomo Migone: Gian Giacomo Migone. I would like to come back to the responsibilities of the international community. There's something that makes me very proud as an Italian, and it is that whenever there are civilian casualties in Afghanistan or in any place where there's an international intervention, there is a greater outcry in Italy, or is as greater a cry, that when we lose our soldiers because there is a difference between waging war and international security. If there is a police action, the difference between a police action and war is that there is a constant preoccupation that there should be no side effects. Why am I saying this? I am saying this because I think that a condition for the efficacy of what we are doing in Afghanistan and in other places, it's that

we understand this sort of priority. The outcry should not be only in Afghanistan when something like that happens, but it should be everywhere. And I think it's very important that in particular our American allies understand this, and that consequently when this happened--it's happened with the Americans being the actors, but the same goes should they be Italian or British or whatever, that there should be public transparency and severe punishment, which is the justification for depriving the Afghanistanis, in this case, of their jurisdiction other than what we are doing.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Thank you, sir. Thank you. Okay. We would like--there's two questions about punishment, there's a question--

The Hon. Marc Grossman: Well, I agree. No, I--

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Yeah.

The Hon. Marc Grossman: I'd like to start here--

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Yeah.

The Hon. Marc Grossman: --with the question of the justice system. I have to say that I don't think I need to sit here and justify the United States justice system, either civilian or military. We have a rule of law. We live in a system where there's a system of justice. And in both cases that you raise--and I think our Italian friend as well--the U.S. justice system works. And so for you to say to me, "oh well, why aren't people punished, and why doesn't somebody take care of this," we have a system of law in the United States of America. And in both cases, I think it applies.

First, this poor Sergeant Bales, I don't know anything about him, although I do know that he was charged just yesterday. In our system, he actually has rights and those rights ought to be respected, because that's what the rule of law is all about. So, he was charge yesterday. I'm sure there'll be a process. I'm sure there'll be a trial. And it'll either be civilian or military--I'm not big expert in this. But, I'm

sorry, I don't take that as an attack, I take that as an attack on our justice system, which I really, I don't think is justified.

For a second thing, on Mr. Davis, the first 50 days that I was the special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan were the 50 days that Raymond Davis was in Pakistani custody. So, the idea that he was whisked out of Pakistan, with all due respect, doesn't fit the facts. And what we promised the Pakistan government we would do is that the Justice Department would investigate that case, and that's what they're doing. So, I think it's really important here to just stop and recognize that the rule of law is a very important thing, and it's a very important thing for the United States.

And with respect to the question, I think that Harlan raised, it's a very important question for Pakistan and Afghanistan as well. So, we try to live up to our obligations under our laws.

To Harlan's question, no chinstrap necessary. I mean, I assume that must be a recommendation you've made to colleagues at the Pentagon and the National Defense University. And let me divide this into two. First, on the Pakistan parliament, I think it's important to say here, especially after the terrible, terrible killings of Pakistani soldiers on the 24th and 26th of November, that I believe that the Pakistani parliament's effort to kind of debate, the reset, to think about U.S./Pakistan relations, I think actually that's been a very positive thing in its way. It's lowered its temperature. The Pakistani parliament is a civilian democratic institution. They've taken their time, and I respect that. I respect both their ability to do it, their capacity to do it and the time it's taken them to do it.

Now, where do we stand? On Monday last, they made their recommendations. There'll be a further debate in that parliament on the 26th and it'll go on for a few days. I don't know. They'll make their suggestions to

the government, and once that happens there'll be a conversation between the United States of America and Pakistan. And I think that's a very good and legitimate process we ought to respect.

In terms of the specifics, well, we'll have to see. One of the things I'm sure of is that we'll find a way between Pakistan and the United States to manage cooperation and counterterrorism, because for both countries. Both countries, victims of terrorism, we ought to be working together to try to stop them. I said I'll leave to you a specific recommendation to the people in Washington.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Okay. There's still the question of Iran, and that certainly must be on the minds of people in the region as well. Carl, you have something specific?

The Hon. Carl Bildt: Well, I was in the region last week, and that was one of the strong messages that was given to me, both in Kabul and Islamabad. And the words used describing what they thought were going to be the

impact of an attack on Iran on the region were very strong.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: In what sense?

The Hon. Carl Bildt: Negative, mildly speaking.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Yes. Because--

The Hon. Carl Bildt: But I'm trying to--

Ms. Lyse Doucet: --you know, who will they side with? Who will Afghanistan side with? Who will Pakistan side with? It's--

The Hon. Carl Bildt: Well, one of the things in Pakistan at the moment, for reasons that we can discuss, is that the sentiment is extremely anti-American. I mean, you can even say hysterically anti-American. And that's why I think most of this parliamentary process is extremely good, that they discuss these issues and they have sort of parliamentary procedure, and sort out their relationship with the United States, on the different (unintelligible) issues. But a thing like this would be seen, they say, as an attack against a Muslim country.

The Americans or the Israelis even worse from the perception point of view bombing another Muslim country. And in a volatile, fragile political system that is having all of its problems, they don't look entirely positive at the consequences of that.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Shaida Abdali. I mean, there was also questions about punishment and outrage over any outrages over things.

Mr. Shaida Mohammad Abdali: Well, I don't want to repeat my earlier--

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Yes.

Mr. Shaida Mohammad Abdali: --parts about this incident. It was really a tragic. And you saw people coming on the day where you were present and others as well. People ask two things. One: guarantees for the future these incidents would not be repeated; second: justice, punishment. And we've been given this assurance that he would be taken accountable and he would be accountable to the crime that he committed. And we are hoping that punishment will be given to this

criminal, and also future guarantees against such incidents.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Good. We've 15 minutes left. I want to open up the floor to whatever question you may have. Someone is--why, that must by Anne-Marie Slaughter who is doing gymnastics in the back wanting to be noticed. We'll take a few questions about any aspect of the endgame or not endgame that you want to ask. Miss, right here. Thank you.

Ms. Anne-Marie Slaughter: Thank you. So, as an American lawyer, I certainly would stand for the American justice system, and I completely understand Amb. Grossman's defense of it. But I think he must have also meant that a--although I think Sgt. Bales is deeply disturbed, the crime of massacring family members, 16 people, Americans have to imagine what it would be to be in our country, to have someone kill our children and then be taken away for justice. It is part of our role, as a global leader, to try to put ourselves in others' shoes and to understand that,

fundamentally, that kind of justice has been a sore spot for all countries that have been militarily or diplomatically in other countries. And I know Amb. Grossman agrees with me. I just want to make sure that it is clear that we do see this from the perspective of the people of the ground. And, as a mother, my heart goes out to those who have lost their family members.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Thank you, Anne-Marie.

The Hon. Marc Grossman: Could I just say I think that the most eloquent statement on our side of this has been, of course, from President Obama who said to the people of Afghanistan that he felt that these killings were just like killings from our own family. And so I think the emotion of this is as Anne-Marie describes it. My job, I think, was to be clear that we have rule of law and that there's a system of justice that will meet our obligations in this regard.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Okay. I'm going to swing the microphone down. President Ilves has a question, then

Xenia has one, Christian, then Steven, and then we'll come back to--

President Toomas Ilves: Just a brief comment. I mean to take off where the Congressman, who's not here, says--started and talk about the endgame again. I think we have to realize that the--we have to raise the bar for any future Afghan government much higher than simply the kind of Westphalian peace, love, dove, and Woodstock, European model simply because, as you mentioned, Carl. I mean, if you look more specifically at the Latin American issues, I mean, there's one example which is FARC and Colombia and which was successfully resolved by a president, President Uribe, who was hauled over the coals for rather nasty methods.

That's one model that the country could go, which is the insurgency, once again, becomes funded by heroin. The other model, unfortunately, is Mexico where you have special--former Special Forces troops who make up the Zetas. And now you have a lot of well-trained troops in the Afghan army. In other words, I think that

we--when we think of a future government of Afghanistan, it's going to have to be much more rigorous and tough than the kind of bar--what we normally want for a country that has problems.

So it's going to be much, much--we're going to have to demand much more, or we're going to have to look much more through our fingers. But, in any case, it is going to mean a much tougher government, a much tougher regime than I think we, right now, think it's going to be, precisely because of the heroin problem.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Good. And pass the--I think Afghanistan will take the peace and the doves but will leave the Woodstock, actually. They don't want--

Ms. Xenia Dormandy: Thanks very much. Xenia Dormandy, Chatham House. I'd like, if I could, to push you all to beyond 2014. Marc, you mentioned three parts. You're not so worried about security element. There's a political element, and there's a development element. And that's come out in the early words that you all mentioned. I agree. I'm not so worried about

the security. I am very worried about the political element, particularly with an election in 2014 and how that's going to go, and--and you mentioned that. And I'm very worried about the development side of things of which you've seen very little--or insufficient progress in light of the security problems. And then you put on top of that--and this we haven't talked about so much--is the perception at home. Americans do not want to be spending vast quantities of money to support either the Afghan military system or the development system or the political system. And neither do the Europeans. There's a lot of austerity, and people are beginning to question, perhaps quite rightly, why are we spending so much money overseas? So I'd like to ask you, both of you in particular, how do you see post-2014 in light of the fact that both of those paths are very, very important for the progression of Afghanistan, if Afghanistan can stand on its own two feet, particularly in light of the fact

that our peoples don't want to be investing anymore. They want to get out.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Okay. And I think, Steve, do you want to put your question, too, or are you going to go away--to another field?

Mr. Steven Erlanger: Steve Erlanger from *The New York Times*. I want to ask about President Karzai, frankly, whose name hasn't come up yet. I agree Afghanistan should be for the Afghans, and it should be inclusive. But we have a president had a very shaky election, caused an official to resign, who sees 2014 coming, raises questions in his rhetoric about whether he actually wants help from NATO and the Americans, or doesn't, whose rhetoric is becoming increasingly anti-Western, which is upsetting voters and constituencies.

And I'm wondering, you know, with the deadline coming, if I could ask Marc in particular, and Carl, is he really on the side we want him to be on? Is he being helpful in this process? Or is he actually undermining our effort to find a way out that's safe, that's

stable, out of Afghanistan? In other words, can he last? I'm not sure he can.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Okay. So three sets of worries. Who would like to--Shaida's still thinking about it, I think. Carl--okay.

The Hon. Carl Bildt: Well, I mean, we have--we have to understand that every single Afghan politician, and President Karzai is one of them, is now adjusting to the post-2014 environment. They're guessing what will happen. They're trying to predict. They're trying to maneuver. Everything prior to 2014 is just preliminaries in every single respect. That's where the real Afghan game starts. President Karzai's rhetoric and activities is geared to what's going to happen after 2014. He needs--well, whatever, he's not going to be the president. But, anyhow, he needs to sort of create the condition for survival in a political environment that's going to be framed differently when most of the forces are gone. You and I would have behaved exactly the same.

His audience is not the United States or Sweden. His audience is Afghanistan. That is a somewhat different country with a somewhat different culture. So we should see him maneuvering--and all of the others, by the way, they're all the same. I mean, they're living mentally in the world where we have left already. And they are maneuvering the rhetoric and otherwise in that particular direction.

The issue that we should focus on, I agree, is the political decision, elections. And one of the battles that we have, or one of the discussions we have with President Karzai is that he will not be able to organize an election of his own. I mean, we need to pay it for purely financial reasons. He can't afford it because it's a vast logistical enterprise. But we're not going to fund it if we don't have some sort of say in how it's done. By some sort--it's not going to be a Swiss election. It's part of the mountains. But it needs to be something that is seen as reasonably fair by all of Afghans because otherwise the country's going

to break apart. And we need to have a dialogue--he needs to have a dialogue national on how that should be done. I think that's absolutely critical because if that breaks with elections, we can forget about security.

And then the fiscal sustainability, we are, to a certain extent, guilty because we have been going through here--we--some have been going through him all the time to say you have to increase the Afghan national army by a further hundred thousand people or something like that. And he's been doing it, and we've been funding it. And if we then suddenly say we've got to withdraw from the funding, then we have taken 100,000 people in and given them a gun. And after having given them a gun, we give them unemployment. I mean, you can guess what's going to be the consequence of that. And Marc Grossman is going around Europe and the U.S. trying to find a solution to that particular problem.

I would identify those: The political transition and the fiscal sustainability, which is not just funding the Afghan army. It's funding virtually everything in Afghanistan when we have left. And we have to tell our respective electorates back home, Sweden, United States, wherever, that, yes, we have been investing in Afghanistan, but we need to continue to invest in Afghan--not as much because the thing that has been very expensive are our soldiers. They're incredibly expensive, our soldiers. So everything else that we're going to do that is not soldiers is going to be cheap in comparison with what we've done, but essential in order not to lose the investment that we've actually made in that country.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Okay. Marc, serious concerns going from the government and coke and heroin and president--

The Hon. Marc Grossman: Yes. Well, the--no, to these very important points (unintelligible) first. First, I think the question of, am I not worried about security, I would push where Mr. Abdali is. I've been

very 'cause positively surprised, I guess, but positive about the transition that has taken place so far. And I think we ought to take some heart in that. The two tranches of transition have actually been pretty successful. And I think transition three and maybe four, five will be the same. They get harder, but, so far, we ought to take some heart in that, as we ought to take heart in some other positive developments in Afghanistan.

For me, the security question goes back to the point that I try to make to Trudy. And I say this just as an American, and, obviously, there's work to be done here. I think it's imperative that we get this strategic partnership done at some point in the future so that there's a framework for Afghanistan and the United States to look out after 2014 about the security relationship. And I think that that will give, as I said, confidence to people, all kinds of people in Afghanistan that we are there to continue the

counterterrorism mission, to continue to support the efforts of the people Afghanistan.

Second, on the question of development, and I accept why it is that you're so concerned about that. But then again--and I don't mean to be boring on this subject--but I'll say it again. It won't be possible for American taxpayers, Swedish taxpayers, other taxpayers to give the levels of official development assistance forever and ever and ever in Afghanistan. And so I just say, please, let's get started on trying to figure out what might be possible in terms of the private sector, in agriculture, in extractive industries, in these connections to India and Pakistan and to Central Asia. And as Carl very right pointed out--and I want to completely associate myself with this--this doesn't solve your problem between now and 2014. It does not. But unless we start working on this, it won't solve the problem after 2014. And I think that's a very important part of this.

Third, on the question of money and sort of what people can expect in the future, as Carl said, I've spent Monday to Friday here going from capital to capital, NATO country, ICEF country, to talk about the future of the Afghan National Security Forces. And what's my pitch? My presentation is that after 2014, the Afghan National Security forces need to be of a sufficient size and also need to be a sustainable number, and that that cost can't be borne by the United States of America alone. And that cost has to be borne, some by Afghanistan, some by our ICEF partners, certainly a majority by the United States of America, and then others that ought to contribute as well.

And so this is a classic example, it seems to me, of how you set the 2015 conditions so that you can be sufficient for security, sustainable in terms of the money and broaden the base on which there is support for Afghanistan. Again, I go back to the Bonn Declaration. What did it say? It said that every one who signed that declaration would be for funding,

training, and equipping a sufficient Afghan National Security force.

Finally, on the question that Carl raised about the increase of this force up to 352,000 and then the reduction of that force, I can just assure him that there's a better plan than sending 100,000 armed people out into Afghan society. And people are thinking a lot about that, so among your worries, Carl, I wouldn't put that one--

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Shaida, very strong criticisms of Afghan government and the president as well.

Mr. Shaida Mohammad Abdali: Well, if this is partnership between leaders, we should first look into the meaning of partnership. If we consider this relationship based on a partnership on equal footing, then you will have to see leaders with sovereign interests. I see this as a positive omen to see the partnership getting mature and mature and mature. And the--part of the critic goes to the international community for helping Afghanistan, taking it to a place

where it is right now asking for, you know, question of sovereignty and asking for independence, asking for its own interests. It's all because of the strength that we've gained in the last two years. So it is nothing to worry about.

Sometime we feel hurt when we see the misinterpretation of President Karzai's remarks. It's basically for the good of both of us. He--on the criticism of him talking of civilian casualties and--listen, of course, he's the leader of Afghanistan. He has to protect Afghan people. But then, eventually, the criticism of him on this issue is basically for the protection of the goodwill of Afghan people toward international (unintelligible) in the long run.

We don’t want this partnership to be based on a short term existence. We would like to see this partnership strong, long lasting, a solid one. So the criticism is because of this huge relationship that we have covering lots of issues. Therefore, you tend to see issues raising between leaders who deal with lots

of issues between the two countries, so I basically see this on a positive note, to see the maturity of the Afghan government and state. And I basically look at this to be with a very positive strong outcome eventually, which would be a partnership unbreakable on very solid footing.

Ms. Lyse Doucet: Thank you very much. I'm afraid that we're coming to the end of our panel, and I apologize to those had their hands up and still wanted to speak. I'm always struck when we have discussions on Afghanistan that for all of the questions that have been raised, and you raised very good questions today about the partnership, challenges and risks in the partnership, how much energy, troops and money is still invested in Afghanistan. I think it is one of the countries where the international community is perhaps the most engaged.

And I think what we heard from your questions today is some of the real worries about this partnership and the situation in Afghanistan and the region as we go

forward. We heard from our panelists a real sense of the risks, if not in some cases the dangers. But we also heard about the commitment. And there is, of course, behind all of that what I mentioned earlier, Leon Panetta talking about the hell of war. We don't know when we wake each day what else will happen in Afghanistan.

The Afghans have an expression which has come about after more than 30 years of war, which is sort of along the lines of (speaks foreign language) which means, when it gets worse, it doesn't get better. But I want you to join me in thanking our panelists who are trying to make it better. Thank you very much.

Mr. Craig Kennedy: Now, 11 months ago, we -- many of us here lost a dear friend and one of the driving forces behind GMF and, frankly, the Brussels Forum, Ron Asmus. This conference celebrates his legacy in bringing Americans and Europeans together for debate and discussion. But we at GMF also wanted to celebrate another aspect of his legacy, policy entrepreneurship.

In talking with many of Ron's friends, Carl, Mark, a lot of other people who are here in the room, what stood out was that Ron was an intellectual, but he was also a guy that believed in going out and selling ideas and organizing meetings and pulling people together and convincing others that their ideas really made sense. And we wanted to encourage the new generation of people like that.

I think, Carl, you mentioned early on in a conversation, who are the Ron Asmuses in their 20s and 30s now. And I think we're starting to get an answer. We created this fellowship program. It's not to take them out of their jobs. It's to supplement the work in their jobs. We, on pretty short notice, ended up with 28 really good applications. We were originally going to take two. We decided to take three and, frankly, if we'd had a little bit more money, we'd probably taken five or six. (Technical difficulty) really impressive. And it reassures me that there is another generation

coming. So why don't you come on out here and let me tell you who the winners are.

The first is Nora Fisher Onar from the United States. She's an assistant professor of international relations at Bahcesehir University in Istanbul and a visiting fellow at the Center for International Studies at Oxford. Her project is Toward a New Grand Bargain: Turkey, The Eastern Mediterranean and the Transatlantic Alliance.

The second winner, Merle Maigre from Estonia is a policy advisor in the policy planning unit at NATO. Her project is Transatlantic Defense Policy: Avoiding European Demilitarization.

And the final winner is Mark Simakovsky from the United States. He's a Eurasia strategy advisor and native coordinator in the office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russia, Ukraine and Eurasia policy in the U.S. Department of Defense. His project is Smart Enlargement: Shaping NATO's European Partnerships and Enlargement in a New Era.

Please join me in congratulating them. And please make an effort to get to know them. One of the things that we're going to be doing is involving them over the course of this year in many of our conferences. We're going to be trying to steer them to some of the people that were important to Ron and helped him in his various projects. I can look around the room and see many people that will be asked to spend a few moments, give some advice, and help the next generation. Frankly, I can't think of a better tribute to Ron than to have three or four new people that are out pushing, prodding, sometimes being annoying, as they try to get the policy community to do a better job. So thank you.

Okay. So why don't we go upstairs for a few minutes and then we're heading out at 6:30.