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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6050

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January 8, 2013

Honorable Thomas E. Donilon
National Security Advisor
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Donilon:

We just completed a two-day visit to Afghanistan with visits to Regional Commands South and East as well as Kabul. In general, we were very impressed with the progress that has been made just in the short time since our last visit in May 2012.

The transition strategy where the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) are taking responsibility for security throughout the country is working well.

The setting of deadlines for the redeployment of the surge forces from Afghanistan has reinforced to the Afghan leadership the need to take the lead and to do so with real energy. For example, in Regional Command East, which is the most difficult area of the country, 87 percent of operations were carried out solely by Afghans last month. This seems to run counter to some other reported statistics, but you should check it out!

The Afghan Local Police (ALP) program has proven to be extraordinarily successful, highly feared by the Taliban. It demonstrates the growing determination of the villagers throughout the country to remove the Taliban and to resist their attempts at intimidation and recruitment of local young men. Because of this success, the plan is now to increase the authorization for the number of ALP from 30,000 to 45,000.

We support the establishment of a small number for the post-2014 force. At the same time, we are convinced that it will be necessary for the success of the mission, i.e. to prevent Afghanistan from once again becoming a safe haven for al Qaeda and its affiliated organizations, to reconsider the current plan to reduce the size of the ANSF from 352,000 to around 230,000 after 2015. The savings in Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) funds as a result of the reduction in the size of the U.S. force should help make this action affordable.

Accordingly, we recommend that when the President announces his decision on the size of the post-2014 force, that he also announce he is reviewing the question of the size of the ANSF after 2015. This would also help reinforce the point that we are not pulling out of

Afghanistan when that perception (false though it be) will be argued by some when the President announces the residual force number.

Sincerely,



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Carl Levin
Chairman