

Chairman C.W. Bill Young
Subcommittee on Defense
House Committee on Appropriations
Oversight Hearing – United States Central Command and International Security
Assistance Force
April 18, 2013
Opening Statement As Prepared

The Committee will be in order.

This morning the Committee will hold a hearing on United States Central Command and the International Security Assistance Force and U.S. Forces Afghanistan. We will focus primarily on regional issues related to the whole of Central Command, the war in Afghanistan, U.S./Afghanistan relations, and the upcoming drawdown.

The mission of Central Command is to promote cooperation among nations, respond to crises, and deter or defeat state and non-state aggression, and supports development and, when necessary, reconstruction in order to establish the conditions for regional security, stability, and prosperity.

The NATO/ISAF's primary objective in Afghanistan is to enable the Afghan government to provide effective security across the country in order to ensure that Afghanistan can never again become a haven for terrorists. To achieve this goal, the 50 nations which make up the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) conduct security and stability operations throughout the country together with the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and train and develop the Afghan forces. As responsibility for security is gradually transitioned to the Afghans, ISAF's mission is shifting progressively from a combat-centric role to a more enabling role focusing on training, advising and assisting.

Today, we are pleased to welcome the two Generals that make these missions a reality:

General Lloyd J. Austin III, Commander, U.S. Central Command

This is General Austin's first appearance before this subcommittee in his capacity as the Central Command Commander. General Austin is a West Point graduate and his extensive combat experiences include Operations Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom, and Operation New Dawn. He has commanded at every level, previously served as the Chief of Staff for U.S. Central Command, and most recently served as the Vice Chief of Staff for the U.S. Army.

General Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., is the Commander of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and U.S. Forces Afghanistan (USFOR-A). General Dunford has also commanded at every level in the Marine Corps. He was Commanding General to the First Marine Expeditionary Force and Commander, Marine Forces Central Command. Prior to accepting command of ISAF and U.S. Forces Afghanistan, General Dunford served as the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps.

Generals, thank you for testifying before the Subcommittee today.

We are eager to hear your testimony which will assist the Committee to better determine the needs of the command, and the wartime needs of servicemembers deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Members from each military service and our NATO counterparts have been deployed since 2001 under the authority of the United Nations Security Council, which authorized the establishment of the force to assist the Afghan government in the maintenance of security in Kabul and its surrounding areas – in particular to enable the Afghan authorities as well as UN personnel to operate in a secure environment.

Transition to Afghan lead for security started in July 2011 and is well underway. We are told that the Afghan Security Forces are growing stronger and more capable, and as a result, ISAF's role is changing, from leading operations to enabling the Afghan security forces to conduct independent operations themselves.

This year, more than ever before, we find our resources to fund all government activities are more and more scarce. Still, this committee is committed to supporting our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines to accomplish their wartime missions.

Generals, we look forward to your testimony, but first, I would like to call on the ranking member, my friend, Pete Visclosky for his comments.

#####

