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An Open Letter to President Donald J. Trump A Strategy to Secure Afghanistan

It is time responsibly to end the loss of American lives and treasure in Afghanistan after 18 years of hard-fought, but ultimately ineffective warfare, *while denying a victory to radical Islamic terrorists* – be they the Taliban, ISIS, Al Qaeda or others. An alternative **“Secure Afghanistan” approach** would greatly reduce the U.S. footprint in-country while both maintaining the lethality of American forces who remain and enhancing the capacity of the Afghan people and their security forces to defend against their Taliban and other enemies. Reduced to its essence, the Secure Afghanistan strategy would involve two proven techniques:

1) **A Special Operations model** for bringing to bear relatively small units of highly skilled professionals backed by reliable airpower, sophisticated intelligence capabilities and logistic supply. This would reduce the existing 15,000 U.S. forces currently in country to approximately 2,000 and the number of contractors there from 37,000 to roughly 6,000. Associated costs would be reduced from \$62+ billion per year to under \$10 billion per year. The desired end-state would be an Afghanistan that is stable, decentralized and inhospitable to the radical Islamic terrorists who seek to use it once again as an inspiration and operating base for their jihad against the United States..

Key elements of this model will be: Contracted veteran mentors with previous combat experience in Afghanistan, will be attached for long-term (i.e., multi-year) assignments that integrate them as uniformed personnel in every Afghan battalion – eating, sleeping, training and fighting alongside that nation’s forces from platoon to battalion levels, assuring low turnover and providing maximum area experience and continuity. **Contracted Supplemental Air Power** will supply the Afghan Security Forces with decisive combat enablers – surveillance, close-air support, medevac, and fixed and rotary wing mobility and logistics – at a fraction of the costs of current USAF/NATO operations. **Governance Support Advisors** will supervise resources, assure reliable delivery of combat logistics and provide accountability for funds and contractor performance.

2) **A “CORDS” model** for equipping, training and providing funding for self-defense, self-government and self-development enabling local communities to play a key supporting role in defeating the Taliban and other insurgents. In Vietnam, the **Civil Operations and Rural Development Support** (CORDS) program proved highly effective as part of the Vietnamization Strategy, until the Ford Administration effectively surrendered. Such an effort can build upon *and transform* the existing Afghan National Solidarity Program and its Community Development Councils (CDCs).

Key element: Veteran security advisors under contract to the Afghan government will be assigned as civilians to help local communities train self-defense militia in each community. An advisory team would be deployed in a community for three-months, then re-assigned to another community. In

each community, the advisory team would add a security component to the local CDC. Advisors would coordinate and train responsible community leaders to interface with rapid response forces, including airpower, of the Afghan Army and Police. The advisory teams would initiate in each community reliable identification of insurgents.

The Afghan government would direct district governors to develop annual community plans for defense and development. Each CDC would adopt a development budget for its community and oversee expenditure of five-years of U.S. and micro-loan funding and local tax revenues. POTUS would designate a single official to be accountable for all U.S. interests and resources in Afghanistan leading an integrated civil/military organization.

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