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Dereliction of Duty II:

Senior Military Leaders' Loss of Integrity Wounds Afghan War Effort

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Senior ranking US military leaders have so distorted the truth when communicating with the US Congress and American people in regards to conditions on the ground in Afghanistan that the truth has become unrecognizable. This deception has damaged America's credibility among both our allies and enemies, severely limiting our ability to reach a political solution to the war in Afghanistan. It has likely cost American taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars Congress might not otherwise have appropriated had it known the truth, and our senior leaders' behavior has almost certainly extended the duration of this war. The single greatest penalty our Nation has suffered, however, has been that we have lost the blood, limbs and lives of tens of thousands of American Service Members with little to no gain to our country as a consequence of this deception.

Introduction

These are surely serious charges and anyone who would make such claims had better have considerable and substantive evidence to back it up. Regrettably, far too much evidence does exist and I will here provide key elements of it. As I will explain in the following pages I have personally observed or physically participated in programs for at least the last 15 years in which the Army's senior leaders have either "stretched the truth" or knowingly deceived the US Congress and American public. What I witnessed in my most recently concluded 12 month deployment to Afghanistan has seen that deception reach an intolerable low. I will provide a very brief summary of the open source information that would allow any American citizen to verify these claims. But if the public had access to these *classified* reports they would see the dramatic gulf between what is often said in public by our senior leaders and what is actually true behind the scenes. It would be illegal for me to discuss, use, or cite classified material in an open venue and thus I will not do so; I am no WikiLeaks guy Part II. Fortunately, there is a provision that allows me to legally submit a classified report to Members of Congress. In conjunction with this public study I have also submitted classified reports to a number of US Representatives and Senators, both Democrats and Republicans. As the duly elected representatives of our people, they are authorized to see the classified data and empowered to do something about it. For the sake of so many who have paid with their blood – and the sake of those Service Members who have not yet had to pay that price – it is my sincere hope that Congress acts to resolve these issues expeditiously.

In the first section below I will demonstrate how numerous military senior leaders have used omission and outright deception in order to prevent the American public from knowing the truth in regards to the genuine conditions on the ground in Afghanistan. I will explain that there has been a significant volume of information available from numerous and reputable open sources that should have been effective in communicating to the American public the truth of the DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT (As of 11 January 2012)

situation. Owing to numerous factors (the key of which are discussed in detail in subsequent sections of the report), however, the powerful and pervasive personalities of several US general officers have been surprisingly effective at convincing even highly educated Americans to believe what the generals say and not what their eyes and evidence tell them. In the second section I will help the reader gain a better understanding of how the situation described in Section I came to be. For the most part restricting myself to discussing situations in which I was physically a participant, I will first present a number of facts – many of which will be seen in public for the first time – regarding how Army senior leaders have been deceiving the US Congress and American people on some key modernization programs going back to the 1990s. In this section you will see how despite year after year of Government Accountability Office (GAO) analysis done explicitly for the US Congress which showed major and repeating failures in the Future Combat Systems (FCS), the Army’s senior leaders instead told Members of Congress and the US public in press releases that the opposite was true; because Americans have trusted the Army’s leaders more than any other in the country, they accepted the word of the generals and ignored the GAO reports and the physical absence of successful products.

A second major sub-element to this section will be a demonstration – also containing significant new information that has never been seen by the American people – revealing that what virtually the entire country and even a great percentage of our uniformed Service Members believe about how and why the Iraq surge of 2007 was successful, was in fact grossly inaccurate. The version of events that depicted the lion’s share of the causality going to superior US generalship and the adoption of the “protect the population” strategy was created and sustained by a number of key senior US generals. When the full facts are examined, however, it becomes very clear that the surge of troops in 2007 was *instrumental* at best and according to one senior ground commander who led much of our fight in the Anbar province, “75% to 80% of the credit” for the surge’s success lies elsewhere. The inaccurate assigning of the reason for the 2007 Iraq surge’s success has profound implications for our current war in Afghanistan and doubly so for the surge forces ordered by the President in late 2009. Had the President known the truth of what really happened in 2007 Iraq it is a virtual certainty he would not have made the decision he did in November/December 2009. In any case, the situation demonstrates a growing and expanding willingness on the part of our country’s senior military leaders to use “Information Operations” even on domestic audiences to manipulate the system in order to get what they want.

As the last section demonstrates, the senior military leaders have been remarkably successful in achieving their desires; but as a result, our country has squandered almost a full decade in which it might have made noteworthy advancements in its force structure, has continued pursuing a military strategy that has proven to be an abysmal failure during a time when effective outcomes might have been found, and worst of all, has cost the lives and limbs of tens of thousands of American Service Members – and reportedly deprived hundreds of thousands more of their psychological and emotional well-being.

Section III will cover a broad range of negative consequences that our country has paid and will continue to pay until changes are made. We’ve lost credibility with our allies and friends in the DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT (As of 11 January 2012)

region; we've lost almost all credibility among even the Afghan population and individual government officials; and our word has no value among our enemies. Many may be tempted to believe it unimportant what our enemies think, but it is almost as important as it is for us to have our closest allies believe in us: at some point this war will have to end in a political settlement of some sort. If our enemy isn't able to believe the word of our country, we may never find a foundation upon which to reach an agreeable accord to end the war on terms acceptable to us.

Finally I will lay out a few recommendations on a way forward to address these deficiencies. There is a bit of good news to be had, however. While there are a number of general officers and senior leaders who have not dealt honorably with the American people, there are a great many others who have. As I note in the body of this report, the vast majority of the Soldiers and Marines I've met and personally observed in action are among some of the most remarkable, talented, and dedicated men and women I've ever met. Further, there are also some general officers in our Army who are dedicated to the nation and still have their integrity fully intact. For example the new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey, by all accounts, is a man of strict adherence to honor and integrity.

In order for the current crop of excellent junior Army leaders to become the next generations' senior Army leaders – and continue to demonstrate the same adherence to honor and integrity – changes must be made and made quickly of today's senior cohort. I've lost count of the number of truly promising and intelligent leaders who have gotten out of the service at the mid-level because they could not stomach the mendacity at the top. If we can change the culture at the top, however, the future for our Armed Forces and our country can once again be very bright.

Why Should You Listen to Me?

I am a Lieutenant-Colonel in the United States Army, serving as a Regular Army officer in the Armor Branch. I have just completed the fourth combat deployment of my career (Desert Storm, Afghanistan in 2005-06, Iraq in 2008-09, and Afghanistan again in 2010-11). In the middle of my career I served eight years in the US Army Reserve and held a number of civilian jobs, one of which was an aide for US Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (Legislative Correspondent for Defense and Foreign Affairs). This report does not constitute a comprehensive investigation into the corrupt nature of the senior ranks, but rather will be limited to the programs and combat tours in which I have personally engaged since 1997. Though the number is limited, the assignments I have had have placed me in arguably the most significant Army programs of the past 15 years.

During my most recent Afghan deployment my duties required that I travel extensively throughout Regional Command (RC) - North, RC-East, and RC-South, covering 9,178 miles. I conducted mounted and dismounted combat patrols with our troopers, travelling at various times in MRAP vehicles, MRAP All-Terrain Vehicles, and Strykers. I spent time with both conventional forces and Special Forces troops. While on dismounted patrol I once stepped on an IED that we discovered and somehow did not detonate; was in an MRAP patrol that was attacked with an IED (no one was injured); was twice on combat outposts attacked by Taliban dismounts; was rocketed and mortared more times than I could count, several times impacting so close my ears rang for hours afterwards. DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT (As of 11

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LTC Daniel L. Davis on patrol in Khost Province and Kunar Province, 2011

Throughout this process I interviewed or had conversations with over 250 Soldiers from the lowest ranking 19-year old private, to sergeants and platoon leaders, company commanders, battalion commanders, brigade commanders, and Division commanders, as well as staff members at every echelon. In addition, I have had conversations with Afghan security officials, Afghan civilians, and a few village elders. I cite all the above not at all to boast about any personal accomplishments, but rather to convey that the conclusions and observations made throughout the remainder of this report are not made by an officer that was limited to one location, but one given a rare opportunity to see and participate in operations in almost every significant region of Afghanistan.

Section I: Into Afghanistan

In early 2009 International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) commander General David McKiernan was fired by the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff because they lost confidence in his ability to lead. General Stanley McChrystal was given McKiernan's command because – according to a 12 May 2009 Wall Street Journal news article – “Mr. Gates’ decision to ask for Gen. McKiernan's resignation came after a behind-the-scenes campaign by an influential group of current and former military officers, many of whom played key roles developing and backing the Bush administration's troop ‘surge’ in Iraq.” Along with General Petraeus (who was at this time the commander of CENTCOM), General McChrystal and his principle deputy General David Rodriguez were among the prime architects of the 2007 Iraq surge and were being expected to reprise their success in Afghanistan.

US Military leadership unambiguously sought to replicate the fundamentals that were believed to have succeeded so well in Iraq and importing them into Afghanistan. Prime among those fundamentals was to “Protect the population” which many still believe was primarily responsible for our success in 2007 Iraq. As will be thoroughly covered in a subsequent section of this report, however, that was never the case in Iraq and as we’re about to thoroughly cover in the next section, it never worked in Afghanistan. What I hope to convey in this section is the lengths DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT (As of 11 January 2012)

to which our current military leadership seems to have gone to keep the façade of success alive despite the presence of considerable quantitative and qualitative evidence to the contrary.

Levels of Deception

Before retiring to become the Director of the CIA, General David H. Petraeus testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee on 15 March 2011 to provide Congress an update on the progress of the Afghan surge. A month later, the Department of Defense published its most recent assessment of the situation in Afghanistan. Both paint a very optimistic appraisal and give the unambiguous impression of success. Below is an excerpt of General Petraeus' opening statement followed by a key passage from the April 2011 DoD report. In his Opening Statement, the General said:

As a bottom line up front, it is ISAF's assessment that the momentum achieved by the Taliban in Afghanistan since 2005 has been arrested in much of the country, and reversed in a number of important areas. However, while the security progress achieved over the past year is significant, it is also fragile and reversible. Moreover, it is clear that much difficult work lies ahead with our Afghan partners to solidify and expand our gains in the face of the expected Taliban spring offensive. Nonetheless, the hard-fought achievements in 2010 and early in 2011 have enabled the Joint Afghan-NATO Transition Board to recommend initiation this spring of transition to Afghanistan lead in several provinces. The achievements of the past year are also very important as I prepare to provide option and a recommendation to President Obama for commencement of the drawdown of the U.S. surge forces in July. Of note, as well, the progress achieved has put us on the right azimuth to accomplish the objective agreed upon at last November's Lisbon Summit, that of Afghan forces in the lead throughout the country by the end of 2014.

AP Photo of General David Petraeus testifying before Congress on March 15, 2011

The April 2011 DoD report said in its Executive Summary: DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT (As of 11 January 2012)
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Since the last *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and its Afghan partners have made tangible progress, arresting the insurgents' momentum in much of the country and reversing it in a number of important areas. The coalition's efforts have wrested major safe havens from the insurgents' control, disrupted their leadership networks, and removed many of the weapons caches and tactical supplies they left behind at the end of the previous fighting season. The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) continued to increase in quantity, quality, and capability, and have taken an ever-increasing role in security operations. Progress in governance and development was slower than security gains in this reporting period, but there were notable improvements nonetheless, particularly in the south and southwest. Over all, the progress across Afghanistan remains fragile and reversible, but the momentum generated over the last six months has established the necessary conditions for the commencement of the transition of security responsibilities to Afghan forces in seven areas this summer.

The following pages quantitatively demonstrate that much of the two public statements above are either misleading, significantly skewed or completely inaccurate. Also I'll demonstrate how this pattern of overt and substantive deception has become a hallmark of many of America's most senior military leaders in Afghanistan. As mentioned earlier in this report, were I able to share the classified reports the gulf between what some of our leaders have said in public and what they know behind the scenes would be dramatic. Nevertheless, even with what I'm about to provide from open source material the gulf will still be clearly evident. In the following sub-sections, I'll cover:

Deception at the Strategic Level

- o The Truth: (U) *Afghan NGO Safety Office Q.4 2010 Report*
- o The Truth: (U) Center for Strategic and International Studies, *"The Failures that Shaped Today's War"*, by Anthony Cordesman

Deception at the Operational/Tactical Level

- o Early 2011 Closing of the Pech Valley:
- o Statements of "Clear Progress" in Helmand Province

Deception against the American Public

- o Statements by Senior Uniformed Leaders from 2004-2010
- o Statements by General David Petraeus 2008-2011

Deception at the Strategic Level

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In this section I have endeavored to examine or discuss reports concerning large scale issues or information regarding regional matters, as opposed to anecdotal information. When the main pillar issues are examined - particularly over a number of years - it becomes very difficult indeed to maintain that anything short of a continual deterioration of our mission has occurred, and continues to deteriorate through today. Absent a significant changing of circumstances or strategy, the President's national security objectives in Afghanistan will not be accomplished.

Tactical Terms?

There are a number of terms that have been used by many senior leaders and pundits when talking to the American public in regards to combat actions in Afghanistan since 2009 that are being used in lieu of tactical terms. For example, the hallmark phrase used in determining success in this current Afghan fight is, "momentum." It is used as a tactical term much like we used "counter-attack" etc, but unlike the list of commonly understood list of tactical terms the US Army specifies in several Field Manuals, the meaning of "momentum" is in the eye of the beholder: you can neither prove nor disprove its existence.

For example, in the waning days of World War II, Germany launched its last gasp, final attempt to return to the offensive: Operation "Wacht am Rhein" - or the Battle of the Bulge, as we came to know it. The allies went on the defensive and employed a number of counter-attacks to break the German offensive momentum. Once accomplished, we would return to offensive action to try and win the war.

That was a measurable mission, and once accomplished, it would be an indisputable fact: either we stopped their westward attack or we didn't. In the Afghan COIN environment there is no such clarity. American Commanders can claim we have "halted their momentum" and who's to say otherwise? Omar Bradley couldn't have claimed he "halted the German offensive momentum" if there were still German tanks plowing deeper into the Ardennes. But in the case of a guerilla war there few identifiable actions that have unambiguous tactical meaning.

Another phrase commonly used by numerous ISAF officials to suggest that we've made progress is the equally undefinable "fragile and reversible. No matter what happens, no one can be pinned down: if it goes well, they cite the drop in insurgent capability as evidence they were right, but if it goes the other way, they have simply to say: "I told you this was fragile." The next one is a bit stranger.

Many ISAF leaders have since repeated this mantra on numerous occasions, variously explaining that since there are more US boots on the ground, there are more targets to hit, or alternatively, "when we take away his sanctuaries, he's going to fight back." But this is hard to support when one examines the physical evidence available. DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT (As of 11 January 2012)

(Davis Photo) Helicopters picking up troops in Kandahar, and Soldiers on patrol in Kandahar, 2011

As of May 2010 the US had more than 94,000 troops on the ground in Afghanistan. Thus, over the next year there were no more than 5 or 6% more troops deployed, yet the number of insurgent attacks, the number of IEDs (both found and detonated), the number of US wounded and US killed all continued to rise on a month-by-month comparison until this past summer – coincidentally when the number of US boots began to decline owing to redeployments.

Further, as was repeated with frequency during the first quarter of 2011 senior ISAF leaders have explained that we killed a significant number of insurgent (INS) leaders and foot soldiers, we took away his former sanctuaries, cut off his supply routes, took away his freedom of movement, discovered a huge number of weapons and ammo caches, and captured hundreds of insurgent fighters. But if these things are so, the expectation of yet another all-time record of violence warned by the leaders was illogical.

If I have tens of thousands of additional ISAF boots, and I kill hundreds of INS leaders thousands of his fighters, capture huge numbers of caches, take away his sanctuaries, and deny him freedom of movement, how could he then *significantly increase* his level of attacks as the Taliban did in the first half of 2011? By any rational calculation, our vastly increasing numbers combined with the enemy's dwindling pool of fighters and loss of equipment ought to have had precisely the opposite effect: they should have been capable of conducting considerably fewer attacks, emplacing a smaller number of IEDs, and their influence on the population should have been notably diminished. Yet none of those things came to pass. ISAF leaders, nevertheless continue to make bold and confident statement after statement that we are succeeding, that the insurgency is weakening, and that the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GoIRA) is gaining the confidence of its people though they offer almost no tangible evidence to that effect, while explaining away the considerable volume or evidence which logically should cause one to reach a very different conclusion.

Ground Truth: (U) *Afghan NGO Safety Office Q.4 2010 Report*

The two unclassified sources I'm about to mention are remarkably accurate and line up precisely from what I observed throughout my 12 months in Afghanistan, during which I traveled over 9,000 miles throughout the country. The conclusions the authors of these reports reach - DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT (As of 11 January 2012)

especially given they have no personal stake in any particular strategy over another working - should be given attention.

The first was produced by the Afghanistan NGO Safety Office (ANSO) and signed by ANSO Director, Nic Lee, and examines the security situation in Afghanistan in order to inform the greater NGO community about the risks they face when operating there. According to the "ANSO Quarterly Data Report Q.4 2010, the ANSO characterized the insurgency as having fought "a significant campaign in 2010 expanding the total volume of attacks by 64%, the highest annual growth rate we have recorded, and securing new strongholds in the North, West, and East of the country. Their momentum would appear unaffected by US-led counterinsurgency measures. The campaign grew increasingly complex with reports suggesting the deployment of parallel governance structures including courts, judges and administrators." There was one other finding, however, on which the ANSO report was uniquely accurate.

Specifically addressing the insurgent performance and capability for violence, the report explains when taking the country as a whole into consideration, they consider their data as "indisputable evidence that conditions are deteriorating. If losses are taken in one area they are simply compensated for in another as has been the dynamic since this conflict started."

But the most damning statement is this:

More so than in previous years, information of this nature is sharply divergent from (International Military Forces) '*strategic communication*' messages suggesting improvements. We encourage (NGO personnel) to recognize that no matter how authoritative the source of any such claim, messages of the nature are solely intended to influence American and European public opinion ahead of the withdrawal, and are not intended to offer an accurate portrayal of the situation for those who live and work here.

There can be little doubt what the author meant in the above: he notes that since General Petraeus has been the commander, the 'strategic communication' message bears little resemblance to the truth, and that this distorted reality is more "sharply divergent" than "in previous years." From my personal experience over the past year, I can tell you this view is accurate. But it's not just the ANSO that comes to this conclusion. One of the more respected defense experts in the United States also notes the stark departure from the truth we've taken. And that's not all. In the first half 2011, ANSO said...

Plus these notes about the UN report in summer 2011. they said... and ISAF retorted...

Ground Truth: (U) *Center for Strategic and International Studies, "The Failures that Shaped Today's War", by Anthony Cordesman*

As part one of a multi-part series on the situation in Afghanistan, Anthony Cordesman, on behalf of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), wrote in a February 15, 2011 article that ISAF and the US leadership failed to report accurately on the reality of the situation in

Afghanistan and notes that, "since June 2010, the unclassified reporting the US does provide has steadily shrunk in content effectively "spinning" the road to victory by eliminating content that illustrates the full scale of the challenges ahead . . ." It is no coincidence that he specified June

2010 as the date the "spinning" began: General David Petraeus took command in June 2010.

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Cordesman, however, explains that despite the dearth of truthful information, there are "some useful unclassified metrics in spite of the tendency to 'spin' and 'message control.' ... Even an overview of the strengths and weakness of unclassified metrics does, however provide considerable insight into both what is known about the war, and the many areas where meaningful reporting is lacking and the reporting available is deceptive and misleading. The US and its allies, and ISAF may currently be repeating the same kind of overall messaging as the 'follies' presented in Vietnam." Could there be a more damning comparison?

Here are some of the more noteworthy points Cordesman made in his presentation:

- US and ISAF won every major tactical clash, but lost much of the country;
- ISAF denied the scale of the insurgency and the seriousness of its rise. Issued intelligence and other reports claiming success that did not exist;
- The US and ISAF remained kinetic through 2009; the insurgent fought a battle of influence over the population and political attrition to drive out the US and ISAF from the start;
- In June 2010, the Acting Minister of Interior told the press that only 9 of Afghanistan's 364 districts were considered safe;
- No ISAF nation provides meaningful transparency and reporting to its legislature and people;

In the overview of his report, Cordesman wrote:

The first report in this series of highlights some of the metrics that reflect a consistent failure to properly resource the Afghan campaign and to react to the growth of the Taliban, the al-Qaeda sanctuary in Pakistan, and the failure of the Afghan government. These failures were driven in part by the lack of unity and realism in ISAF... They also, however, were driven by political decisions to ignore or understate Taliban and insurgent gains from 2002 to 2009, to ignore the problems caused by weak and corrupt Afghan governance, to understate the risks posed by sanctuaries in Pakistan, and to "spin" the value of tactical ISAF victories while ignoring the steady growth of Taliban influence and control.

We'll see the points he made above as a recurring theme in the material that follows. What is critically important to consider is that Anthony Cordesman and the authors of the reports that follow aren't anti-American or a propaganda arm for the enemy; rather they are intensely interested in seeing the United States succeed and wholly in agreement with what we seek to accomplish.

But they are pointing out precisely the same situation that has prompted the writing of this report: our current military leadership is so distorting the information it releases that the deterioration of the situation and the failing nature of our efforts is shielded from the American public (and Congress), and replaced instead with explicit statements that all is going according to DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT (As of 11 January 2012)

plan. Not only is this type of behavior not representative of American values, it also works against our own interests.

In 2010 the violence in Afghanistan was dramatically higher than in 2009. The senior American leaders repeatedly explained that was so because the surge troops went into areas where no troops had been in the past and naturally the Taliban fought against them. But analysis of the situation they describe reveals some pretty significant problems with the logic. On the surface, it certainly seems plausible: the enemy is in possession of location X; I am going to attack X in order to take it from him, thus, there will be an increase in fighting and casualties as a result. In the initial phase that certainly is logical and a spike in violence would reasonably be expected – but only after the initial entry.

For example, when we deployed thousands of Marines into Helmand for the first time in 2008, it was logical to assume that the number of violent acts would increase, as no one had been fighting in many of those areas before our arrival. But after the Marines established a presence and drove the Taliban out of their sanctuaries, there ought to have been a *reduction* in violence, not a continual, unbroken string of *increases*. I'll explain why in this generic example:

Prior to the arrival of ISAF Marine unit A there were already Y number of Taliban forces in a given area, and the number of violent acts/attacks prior to ISAF's arrival had been Z. Let's say we sent 2,000 Marines into the area and their number is now X +2,000 but the Taliban number Y remains constant. As the Marines conduct attacks against Y, logically the number of violent acts would rise. But after several months of sustained operations where X +2,000 continues a relentless onslaught against the insurgents, the Taliban casualties begin piling up by the hundreds. The Marines are equipped with every tool and technology known to war and they can replace 100% of their losses almost immediately. With the passing of time the Taliban strength and capability should begin a terminal decline as the superior number of US troops proves to be an irresistible force against the less-capable Taliban. DRAFT DRAFT

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(Davis Photo) US troops fire 105mm howitzers at Taliban fighters in Kunar Province, 2011

As a means of explaining other reasons the Taliban ought to have been notably degraded in capacity, in numerous speeches during his 12 months in command of ISAF troops, General Petraeus often stated (as he did in his January 2011 letter to US troops) that since the arrival of US surge forces, ISAF has taken away Taliban strong holds, killed or captured hundreds of his senior and mid-level leaders; thousands of foot-soldiers have been removed from the battle field (killed or captured); ISAF has interdicted enemy lines of communication; discovered untold numbers of weapons and ammo caches, and beaten the enemy on battlefields throughout the country.

By any logic, then, since the number of ISAF troops never dropped throughout 2010 and ISAF leaders often reported the Afghan people were coming more and more to our side, then the number of enemy attacks, by any rational calculation, ought to have dropped throughout the second half of 2010, and to have done so precipitously by the summer of 2011, some 18 months after the surge began. But that is not what happened. In fact, as we'll see in the following sections despite the fact we had 94,000 to 100,000 American military personnel on the ground in Afghanistan from May 2010 through December 2011, the violence continued to rise *at almost the same rate it had risen since 2005 all the way through the summer of 2011* (and has leveled off in some places and seen slight drops in others, but remains well above 2009 levels).

Tactical Reporting

There are three key factors which must go our way in order to succeed in this war: 1. We must militarily degrade the insurgency to a sufficiently low level of capability that will enable the Afghan security forces to handle them alone; 2. The ANSF must concurrently be trained to a sufficiently high level they are able to handle the weakened insurgency; and 3. The GoIRA must DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT (As of 11 January 2012)

be minimally corrupt and sufficiently able to govern, providing a viable economy, secure environment, and a fair judiciary. It is reasonable to assume that if the American public came to believe that even after 10 years of effort we were no closer to success in attaining those three requirements than in 2007 or 2008 - even after two full years of a 30,000-person troop surge – support would almost certainly come into question.

While there is actually a considerable body of publicly available information to confirm that none of the three key requirements have developed to the level claimed, for various reasons the mainstream media does not press the issue and simply accepts the interpretation given in press releases and interviews like General Allan's to USA Today. When the American public hears flag officers provide sincerely conveyed explanations for what might appear to be a contradiction between the raw data and the explanation, the public has thus far always ignored their own misgivings and given the generals the benefit of the doubt (though some very recent evidence indicates that blanket acceptance might be on the wane).

In the sections that follow we will take a look at all three key areas: the standing of ANSF, status of GoIRA, and state of the insurgency. To present them I will contrast what our leaders have said in the media with numerous unclassified reports that accurately portray the truth on the ground. In many of these situations I will augment with my own observation, as in a number of cases I have personal experience in the same timeframe and on the ground in the area cited. These excerpts represent a considerable gulf between what is claimed and what is real.

1. The Status of the ANSF and General Caldwell

Cheryl Pellerin of the American Forces Press Service (AFPS) published an article on 14 October

2011 in which she reported about the progress and development made by the Afghan National Security Forces. She opened the article by writing, "Two years of intense education and training have turned members of the Afghan army and police into a national security force that is learning to protect and serve and that is producing a new breed of leaders, the NATO Training Mission commander (LTG William B. Caldwell) said yesterday." DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT (As of 11 January 2012)

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(Davis Photos) Afghan century on guard and a police inspection in northern Afghanistan, 2011

General Caldwell is quoted throughout the remainder of the article making positive statement after positive statement, implying the army and police are making significant strides, which he ended by saying, "We really are starting to see a security force there that understands they are there to protect and serve and not to be served themselves... We realize that if we have the right leaders, we can take on any challenges that are out there. But leaders take time and effort to develop, so we've continued to build more capacity inside Afghanistan to train leaders."

In another AFPS article published on 26 September 2011, General Caldwell was quoted as saying the Afghan army and police had made "tremendous" progress and added, "Today, I can say the return on the investment that we're starting to see is pretty significant from these efforts made over the last two years..." Less than a month later he went further in his flattering description of the ANSF. In a 17 October 2011 ISAF press release, General Caldwell said, "I am amazed at the significant progress that the Afghan security forces have made over these last two years. It's been brought about because of tremendous partnerships that exist in the international community helping get at this very mission." Yet numerous publicly available reports quantitatively refute these many claims.

I can personally attest to seeing a large number of Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police, and Afghan Border Police personnel who were either unprofessional, unwilling to work, or in one celebrated case in the Zharay district of northern Kandahar Province, in league with the Taliban. In almost every combat outpost I visited this year, the troopers reported to me they had intercepted radio or other traffic between the ANSF and the local Taliban making essentially mini non-aggression deals with each other. General Caldwell, however, wasn't the only senior leader to hail the ANSF. DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT (As of 11 January 2012)

On March 15th, 2011 Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, Michele Flournoy along with General David Petraeus testified before Congress on the status of the war in Afghanistan. In her statement she said of the ANSF that the United States had "been able to improve their quality substantially by developing Afghan noncommissioned officers and trainers, expanding the training curriculum, adding literacy programs, increasing retention rates, and partnering Afghan units with ISAF forces in the field. As General Petraeus will describe in detail, US and ISAF forces fighting side-by-side with increasingly capable Afghan units throughout the country have wrested the initiative from the insurgents..."

During my 12 months in Afghanistan I travelled over 9,000 miles and saw or participated in both mounted and dismounted combat patrols in virtually every area US Army troops were engaged. Many of those were joint missions with ANSF forces. What I saw first-hand, in virtually every circumstance, was a barely functioning organization - often cooperating with the insurgent enemy - that was dramatically different than the progressing organization depicted by the Secretary in the March 2011 hearing. I share the following two vignettes as representative examples of what I saw all over Afghanistan.

As part of a visit I made to the men of 1st Squadron, 32nd Cavalry (1-32 CAV) in January 2011, I accompanied one of their patrols to the northern-most check point American forces go in Kunar Province, "Check Point Delta." There was an ANP station there which had reported being attacked by the Taliban two and a half hours prior to our arrival. Through the interpreter I asked the police captain (see photo below) where the attack had originated, and he pointed to the side of a near-by mountain. "What are your normal procedures in situations like these? Do you form up a patrol and go after them? Do you periodically send harassing patrols after them? What do you do?" As the interpreter conveyed my questions, the captain's head wheeled around abruptly to look at the interpreter and then shot a look back to me with an incredulous look on his face and *literally* laughed in my face, and said, "No! We don't go after them; that would be *dangerous!*" DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT (As of 11 January 2012)
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Commander of the Afghan Border Police detachment in Kunar Province

This behavior on the part of the ANSF is quite common in this area. In June 2010, another battalion of the 101st, Task Force "No Slack", were going to fight a major battle against entrenched Taliban near the Marawara Valley in Kunar Province, near the Pakistan border. The plan was for a joint US/ANA battle force. According to the Washington Post which covered the vicious, days-long battle, the Taliban put up a bigger than expected fight – which caused the ANA to run on the first day, never to return. After the US had cleared out the valley, reportedly killing over 150 insurgent fighters, they built two combat outposts so the ANA could "hold" what we had just "cleared." Instead, they ran again.

I was able to run down one of the platoon leaders in TF No Slack who told me that after the June 2010 battle the Americans built two combat outposts for the ANA to set the ANA up for success to hold the valley. However, mere days after the US pulled it's last troops from the battlefield the Taliban started a "whisper campaign" among the locals saying they were going to come back and kill every ANA soldier they found upon their arrival. This mere rumor caused the entire DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT (As of 11 January 2012)

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group to abandon the fighting position. Unfortunately, the story of the Marawara Valley was not yet over.

Only nine months later (March 2011), in order to "create space" for the transition for the unit that was to replace TF No Slack, the battalion was ordered to conduct a new attack in almost the same location (the Taliban had returned and re-entrenched themselves immediately after the ANA abandoned the site). This time, at least the ANA didn't run from the battle, but when the casualties were examined after the battle, the toll was: 25 Americans killed, wounded or injured (six killed), and six ANA killed, wounded or injured (two killed). It wasn't hard to figure out who did the bulk of the fighting. But because our confidence in the ANA was so low, this time we didn't even pretend to leave them there. Thus, we took the same ground twice, and now twice have given it back, as no one "held" after we "cleared." It goes without saying there has been no attempt to "build" or "transfer" - and the Taliban owns the valley today.

2. Out of the Pech

In late January 2011, I went to visit the 1st Squadron, 32d Cavalry Regiment (a unit of the famed 101st Airborne). Before arriving at the Squadron's headquarters I visited first at their parent headquarters, the 1st Brigade. While there I spent considerable time with many of the leaders of 1-32 CAV's parent unit who told me certain US outposts in the Pech Valley of northeastern Afghanistan were to be shut down in the coming months. Their rationale made sense: we were producing nothing of any strategic value by just occupying three large FOBs in this hostile valley.

They told me their Soldiers could perform brilliantly and heroically, win every engagement against the Taliban, but at the end of their year have made no difference. Instead, what they proposed to do was close down three bases in the valley, while holding onto the one at the mouth of the valley in order to deny giving the Taliban a free pass to other locations in Afghanistan. The only concern they had, I was told, concerned the ANSF: would they be able to hold if we left? "Heck no," one officer told me. "We really don't know what they'll do, but you and I both know they won't be able to handle that mission any time soon." DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT (As of 11 January 2012)

(Davis Photo) An American Soldier manning a defensive position in eastern Afghanistan, 2011

Even with that problem, it made sense from a tactical perspective. But instead of just telling the truth and defending it on the actual merits, ISAF applied spin to the story. In a Washington Post story that ran in February 2011, the official spokesman for ISAF was quoted as saying of the Pech shutdown, "Afghan security forces are able to take responsibility of the Pech Valley." NATO spokesman German Brigadier General Josef Blotz explained that in fact "this is testimony to our confidence" in the ANSF's ability to handle the job. A battalion executive officer of one of the ANSF units in that area, however, had a rather different view.

"According to my experience in the military and knowledge of the area, it's absolutely impractical for the Afghan National Army to protect the area without the Americans," a Major Turab, a former second-in-command of an Afghan battalion in the valley told the New York Times. "It will be a suicide mission." The misgivings of the Afghan soldier was not considered and the three bases were shut down or handed to the ANSF.

Several months later the Afghan forces in fact proved incapable of providing security against the insurgents in the Pech - just as Afghan Major Turab had predicted – and US officials made a decision to send American forces right back into the Pech Valley. But instead of simply admitting we'd made a mistake in pulling US forces out the first time, a 12 August 2011 Associated Press article reported, "The US military downplayed the decision to station troops again in Pech. The coalition, along with the Afghan National Army, always maintained a presence in the region, said Lt. Col. Chad Carroll, a spokesman for the coalitions ' eastern command. 'It's just a matter of where they laid their heads at night.'" That, of course, was blatantly untrue. We sent the US troops back in because the Afghan forces were completely DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT (As of 11 January 2012)

incapable of handling the job without US presence. We seem significantly challenged to tell the truth in almost any situation.

3. The Zharay Assessment

In June of 2011 I went to the Zharay district of Kandahar Province to visit units of the 3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division. During this trip I visited with staff officers from the Brigade at FOB Pasab, and a Battalion Commander and his Command Sergeant Major at COP Howz-e Madad. The following day I accompanied a platoon of Combat Company, 1-32 Infantry in a place called COP Nalgham, to a building complex that had just been cleared the night before. The mission was billed as a joint force of one US platoon and an ANA squad establishing a new strong point defensive position from the building complex. What I observed was polar opposite performance between the two units.

(Davis photo) Soldiers from 1-32 Infantry conducting combat operations in northern Kandahar Province

No one expects the ANA to perform anywhere near the level of a well-trained US force, but they are expected to put forth effort and show a willingness to learn. Instead, the US troopers had complete contempt for the ANA and it didn't take me long to figure out why. The complex was still seeded with an unknown number of IEDs in the area and known Taliban fighters in the buildings across the grape field. The temperature was 116-degrees. The American unit did exactly what they were supposed to: work to clear the area of IEDs, build machine gun positions, DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT (As of 11 January 2012)

and prepare defensive works throughout the complex. While the Americans worked regardless of the heat - four of whom suffered slight heat casualties - every ANA troop went to the shade of one room and never helped throughout the day I was there.

4. Tangi Valley and the Successful Transition

On 11 April 2011, US Army News Service published a report that celebrated the successful transitioning of a US combat outpost in the Tangi Valley (Wardak Province) to Afghan control. Officials said COP Tangi was to be returned because of successful military operations in the area and satisfactory development of ANSF forces. According to the article, the US battalion commander LTC Thomas Rickard said, "US forces will still patrol the area. We are going to continue to hunt insurgents in Tangi and prevent them from having a safe haven. As a result of Operation Tangi Smash, the Afghan police shut down a homemade explosives lab and seized nearly 24 kilograms of marijuana. The Afghan national police have already demonstrated their resolve by placing permanent check points at each end of the valley."

The article concluded by reporting, "ANSF will soon run COP Tangi, and TF Warrior (the US unit) will increase operations in Chak (a nearby area). If this trend continues, within a few years, local residents in Chak will be able to look solely toward other Afghans for security and guidance, said Rickard. With such a glowing assessment of the joint US/Afghan effort, one would naturally expect that the insurgents in this area had been seriously degraded. Yet as happened in the Pech Valley, US troops would later be sent back into the Tangi Valley because the ANSF proved unable to secure it without US troops to help. It was, in fact, a mission near the Tangi Valley that a US Chinook helicopter was shot down by the Taliban in August of last year. DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT (As of 11 January 2012)
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(Davis Photo) US Chinook helicopter carrying US troops in central Afghanistan, 2010

In the next several sections I will make limited inclusions of specific statements made by senior officials because there are so many of them and they are so common, it is unnecessary to point them out. The general theme ISAF and US military leaders stress are: the Afghan government will be at least minimally capable by 2014 and is trending in that direction; the violence is waning in AFG specifically as a result of the surge; and the people recognize the way of the

Taliban is a dead-end.

None of those characterizations are accurate.

Drifting Doctrine

For most people, it is quite simply irreconcilable with what we think we *know*, to seriously consider any senior military leader would intentionally tell the American public something that was untrue. In all probability our leaders do not consider what they are saying to be "lying" per se, but an effective part of "Information Operations (IO)" designed to *protect* the support of the American people for our troops in contact.

Evidence suggests our leaders genuinely believe eventually we will wear down the insurgents and if the generals just get a little more time, we'll succeed. If the American public were to know the truth, the thought goes, the people may "incorrectly" judge we aren't going to succeed and "prematurely" demand a withdrawal But as you'll discover in the sections that follow, available DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT (As of 11 January 2012)

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evidence strongly indicates that the current military strategy we are using in an attempt to achieve the President's political objectives has a low probability of success.

The genesis of this evolving thought process goes back to Desert Storm and the praise given to

"Storrnin' Norman" Schwarzkopf for how he handled the media during the first Iraq War. In the decade that followed and with the advancement in satellite communications, the military began to pay more attention to the role of media in conflicts and how it could be used to support operations. [Removed 2003 Roadmap citing making core concept equal to warfighting But the introduction further defines the purpose of the manual and presents a very new concept in the development of IO.

"IO becomes a core competency. The importance of dominating the information spectrum explains the objective of transforming IO into a core military competency on a par with air, ground, maritime and special operations." It is a remarkable development to suggest that using information in combat is on par with ground and air forces. Three years later the Department of

Defense published an unclassified doctrinal manual that provided further clarity on Secretary Rumsfeld's information focus.

The 2006 edition of Joint Publication (JP) 3-13 *Information Operations*, proscribed the synthesis of several heretofore independent categories of information to Joint Forces. JP 3-13 explains that "IO are described as the *integrated employment* (emphasis mine) of electronic warfare (EW), computer network operations (CNO), psychological operations (PSYOP), military deception (MILDEC), and operations security (OPSEC), in concert with specified supporting and related capabilities, to influence, disrupt, corrupt or usurp adversarial human and automated decision making while protecting our own."

The manual also stipulates that an IO cell chief is responsible for ensuring that "IO planners are fully integrated into the planning and targeting process, assigning them to the joint targeting coordination board in order to ensure full integration with all other planning and execution efforts." Since it is so crucial for the Joint Force to "fully integrate" IO into every aspect of military operations, it is important to understand what some of these inputs specifically require. Two are of particular import: military deception and psychological operations.

Military Deception is defined as "(JP 3-14.3) being those actions executed to *deliberately mislead* adversary decision makers as to friendly military capabilities, intentions, and operations, thereby causing the adversary to take specific actions (or inactions) that will contribute to the accomplishment of the friendly mission" and PSYOP as "(JP3-53) planned operations to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence the emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals."

Each of these capabilities by itself is perfectly valid and has legitimate military application. But as we "fully integrate" each of these concepts into a single "IO" cell chief, it becomes difficult not to blur the boundaries between them. Since Public Affairs is also closely associated with the

IO cell - and is charged to "(JP 3-61) provide information to the media, to the commander, and to the supporting forces in near real time. The key to success ... (is) integrating PA operations into

all levels of the command" - the danger of overlap and outright confusion on roles and responsibilities - and limitations/prohibitions - becomes great. The results of this blurring were seen in the writings of some of the Army's senior Public Affairs officers in a 2006 compendium published by the US Army War College entitled, "Information as Power" What some of these senior officers wrote is both troubling and perhaps reflective of the current problems.

In an article written by Colonel Richard B. Leap (*Strategic Communication: An Imperative for the Global War on Terrorism Environment*), he endorses Public Affairs getting involved in more

than their JP3-61 charter requires. He writes:

Many PA practitioners believe their only role is to inform the domestic and international publics with accurate, truthful information and provide access to government and military officials and operations to confirm what is reported. All should agree that PA must always present truthful, credible information, however, if Public Diplomacy and open PSYOP only target foreign audiences, then who besides PA can counter the enemy's or the media's shaping of US domestic opinion? ... An April 2006 Pew Research Center poll sheds light on the effect media "framing" can have on domestic support - in April 2003, 61% of Americans felt the military effort in Iraq was going very well compared with only 13% in April 2006. Public Affairs organizations must devise new means and methods to better "frame" issues for domestic and international audiences on policy successes while countering enemy disinformation in order to reverse these trends.

Further, the US Government must clarify the roles, responsibilities, authorities and relationships between Public Affairs, Public Diplomacy and Information Operations to not only influence foreign target audiences, but to safeguard US national will. A failure to do so may result in strategic defeats in the future.

It seems not to have occurred to the Colonel that the drop in American public support as conveyed in the Pew poll might have had something to do with the actual deteriorating battlefield conditions and not a "failure" on the part of PA to accurately "frame" the matter. More troubling is the author's contention that a valid role for Public Affairs is to "frame" information in order to "safeguard US national will." Since he has just demonstrated that he didn't consider the failing military situation on the ground to be a valid reason for American public opinion to be low, what's to say the implication isn't that we can "frame" only the positive information while suppressing the negative - or to manufacture positive information if none exists.

Colonel Leap concludes his article by recommending several actions designed to strengthen "Military Information Operations." One of the most noteworthy: "It should specifically address all prior legislation beginning with the Smith-Mundt Act that is limiting the effectiveness of Information organizations in the GWOT environment. It should also specify acceptable activities that organizations may perform to protect a key friendly center of gravity, to wit US national will."

In case you aren't familiar with the Smith-Mundt Act, it established the US law that was amended in 1985 to specifically prohibit US organizations from using information "to influence public opinion in the United States." In context, Colonel Leap is implying we ought to change the law to enable Public Affairs officers to influence American public opinion when they deem it necessary to "protect a key friendly center of gravity, to wit US national will." In a more recent essay penned by a more senior officer, Brigadier General Ralph O.

Baker, on the Pentagon's DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT (As of 11 January 2012)

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Joint Staff as the Director for Joint Force Development, seemed to agree with COL Leap in the July-August 2011 edition of *Military Review*. In an article entitled “Information Operations: From Good to Great,” General Baker wrote:

...competently managing information that affects the population’s attitudes and beliefs is a decisive element of successful counterinsurgency. In US military doctrine, we refer to this effort as information operations (IO). Information operations are activities undertaken by military and nonmilitary organizations to shape the essential narrative of a conflict or situation and thus affect the attitudes and behaviors of the targeted audience.

General Baker further explained there were three main points for US military personnel to understand terms of IO: 1) that information operations are “a potentially decisive” component of their COIN strategy; 2) IO needs to be incorporated into “every facet of a unit’s daily framework”; and 3) military commanders must ensure their “intended messages are driven home repetitively to the target audience.” In explaining the third point, he wrote, “the most common mistake committed by units when executing information operations is the failure to achieve sufficient repetitious deliver of messages to their intended audiences. Repetition is a key tenet of IO execution, and the failure to constantly drive home a consistent message dilutes the impact on the target audiences.”

As COL Leap never even considered the American public’s support of the war might have been waning as a direct result of what was *physically happening on the battlefield*, General Baker likewise fails even to address in his article that the information operations – conceptually a perfectly legitimate and useful tool – *must* be tied strictly to *effective actions* on the ground. It is noteworthy that nowhere in the multi-page essay did the General address, even in passing, that the IO plan is worthless if it does not accurately support the actions and conditions on the ground. Instead, he emphasizes this to Army troops:

For years, commercial advertisers have based their advertisement strategies on the premise that there is a positive correlation between the number of times a consumer is exposed to product advertisement and that consumer’s inclination to sample the new product. The very same principle applies to how we influence our target audiences when we conduct COIN.

It is remarkable to consider that a senior ranking officer in the United States Army emphatically suggests that standard marketing strategies are the “very same” for combat operations, and yet it is also very telling. In explaining why a certain operation run by the 1st Armored Division was successful, he cited exclusively the actions the IO staff undertook, implying the actions of the combat troops had either little or no real impact on their success.

General Baker wrote:

After several months of hearing about ISF successes from personal conversations, seeing examples on billboards in the city, hearing of them on the radio stations, and seeing them on TV infomercials, we had a high level of confidence that our target audiences’ belief system and attitudes were affected. Quite simply, they got the message that Iraqi Security Forces were competent and capable, and they began to act accordingly. It may sound easy, but that kind of success requires direct and persistent leader emphasis and involvement at all levels... I cannot overemphasize the importance of such “message saturation.” Such repetition and constancy is a critical prerequisite to influencing a targeted audience.

Had the General included a throw-away line that “...in concert with our brave troops working with their ISF partners...” the concern wouldn’t be so great. But from what he wrote above –

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“Quite simply, they got the message” – it is clear the author genuinely believes that “selling” the idea that the Iraqi Security Forces were competent is what caused the people to “act accordingly.” It wasn’t the US line troops who did the fighting and training, and it wasn’t the Iraqi forces who performed well. It was the IO staff who successfully sold the idea to the Iraqi people.

So whether it’s COL Leap in his belief that US political will is won or lost only on how the message was presented to the American people, or General Baker’s belief that the Iraqi people believed in their forces based on his staff’s message saturation, the actions that occur or the ground truth in a given situation *literally* don’t seem to enter the equation.

These aren’t fringe leaders. General Baker is the Pentagon officer responsible for the Department of Defense’s Joint Force Development (meaning Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines). His ideas carry significant weight with units in all branches of service as they train their troops and units for future combat. Is it any wonder, then, how our current cohorts of senior leaders are conducting Information Operations in Afghanistan? Based on the method of repetition of the same message they seem to be employing – that we are “on the right azimuth”, that the ANSF is steadily improving, etc – they seem to agree with General Baker’s philosophy, as the claims they repeatedly make in public have little to no correlation with actual events on the ground.

Media Failures

One of the key questions most readers must be asking about this point in the report, is how could such an extensive, pervasive, and long-running series of deceptive statements have gone unnoticed by virtually the entire country? There are a number of reasons, but perhaps none bigger than the role played by the major media in this country. This is not an issue where “the liberal media” of the major networks failed, or “the right-wing conservatives” of FOX News, nor any other specific network. Rather, it was a cumulative failure of our nation’s major media in every category: network news, cable news, magazines and major newspapers.

America has long been proud of its open and free press, and we not infrequently boast about it to other countries around the world. The Society of Professional Journalists (which boasts thousands of members in the United States) has a code of ethics that requires its members follow. Key elements of that code include, “Members of the Society of Professional Journalists believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. The duty of the journalist is to further those ends by seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues. Conscientious journalists from all media and specialties strive to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty.” If today’s journalists believed that and actually acted on it, we would almost certainly have a more honest and accountable group of senior leaders. Based only on observed action, however, too few of today’s journalists live their code.

The first point is also probably the most obvious: in today’s world of major journalism, it’s all about viewership ratings which directly drive the bottom line: advertising revenue. If CNN doesn’t put more news shows on that draw larger audiences than FOX News, they’ve got to DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT (As of 11 January 2012)

adjust. One of the key permutations of this requirement comes in which reporters get the best, most accurate news and in the world of military and defense news, that means access to senior leaders, whether uniformed or civilian.

The military, of course, is well versed in this game and is keenly aware of the power that gives them. If reporter A does not cover a story the way senior military leader B desires, reporter A suddenly finds his access to B greatly reduced – or in some cases outright eliminated – even if A works for a major outlet. If reporter X shows he or she will routinely give the slant that is supportive of the IO outlined in the section above, military leader Z will not only find time for them, but will from time to time give them a scoop. Other times reporter Z will be invited to a VIP-level tour of certain locations on the battlefield, sometimes with a three-star general as an escort.

These are not hypothetical possibilities but occur frequently. Few reporters there are who finally get the access to the military's most senior leaders who will then risk it by writing or reporting something either controversial or that will cast the leader or his operations in an unflattering light. The code of ethics that suggests it is a journalist's duty to seek the truth while "providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues" seems to be less important than having access to top leaders. This assessment of today's major media and its relation to those in powerful positions was most recently exposed in the case of the Pentagon's Inspector General (DoDIG) and an investigation it conducted in regards to a charge the Department of Defense under the Bush Administration used former general officers to inappropriately influence the American public by means of providing "expert commentary" on major media news outlets.

The New York Times reported on Christmas Day 2011 that after the DoDIG completed its two year investigation, they found the Pentagon complied "with Defense Department regulations and directives." Given that finding, one would naturally expect to read in the details of the report that the alleged wrong-doing never happened. Curiously, the report noted quite a number of episodes which would seem to indicate problems. According to the Times article, the report found:

- The inspector general's investigation grappled with the question of whether the outreach constituted an earnest effort to inform the public or an improper campaign of news media manipulation. The inquiry confirmed that Mr. Rumsfeld's staff frequently provided military analysts with talking points before their network appearances.

- Given the conflicting accounts, the inspector general's office scrutinized some 25,000 pages of documents related to the program. But except for one "unsigned, undated, draft memorandum," investigators could not find any documents that described the strategy or objective of the program.

- In some cases, the report said, military analysts "requested talking points on specific topics or issues." One military analyst described the talking points as "bullet points given for a political purpose."

- Another military analyst, the report said, told investigators that the outreach program's intent "was to move everyone's mouth on TV as a sock puppet."

☒ According to the report, four military analysts reported that they were ejected from Mr. Rumsfeld's outreach program "because they were critical" of the Pentagon.

☐ One former Pentagon official told the investigators that when Barry McCaffrey, a retired four-star Army general and NBC military analyst, "started challenging" Mr. Rumsfeld on air, he was told that Mr. Rumsfeld wanted him "immediately" removed from the invitation list because General McCaffrey was no longer considered a "team player."

☐ (Retired Army General Wesley) Clark told investigators that CNN officials made him feel as if he was less valued as a commentator because "he wasn't trusted by the Pentagon." At one point, he said, a CNN official told him that the White House had asked CNN to "release you from your contract as a commentator."

☐ The report, however, said that these analysts may have gained "many other tangible and intangible benefits" from their special access. (Eight analysts said they believed their participation gave them better access to top Defense Department officials, for example.)

To sum the above: the Secretary of Defense gave "talking points" to former generals to use when they went on television news shows to sell Mr. Rumsfeld's views; no documentation even existed – among 25,000 documents – to even confirm what the purpose of the Secretary's program was; talking points had a political purpose; when even two well-known former generals – McCaffrey and Clark – didn't move their mouth "like a sock puppet", they were dropped from the program. CNN demonstrated its proclivity to only want spokesmen with current access when they allegedly tried to drop General Clark. Does anyone see a problem with this?

A Pentagon media outreach program – ostensibly to "educate" the public – only uses spokesmen who are willing to speak the bullet points provided by the Secretary of Defense, and if those spokesmen don't act as "team players" and say what the Pentagon wants, they are dropped. For their part, the networks only want men and women to speak as experts if they have that top-level access. All of this begs the question: what sort of objectivity and honest analysis did the American public get from watching the major media outlets during this period?

And equally as troubling: with the small number of excerpts provided by the DoDIG's final report I cited above – all of which reveal questionable practices and clearly indicate the Pentagon's senior leaders were unapologetically attempting to get their message (and *only* their message) spread on the news – the Pentagon's watchdog investigative arm finds the program "complied with regulations and directives." Meaning, we can be sure that such practices will continue without interruption.

Thus, the American people can expect that in future situations where military expert opinion is desired by major news media outlets, the main group of spokesmen who the networks will hire are those with access to top defense officials – and the Pentagon is only going to give access to those willing to share as their "opinions" the bullet points given them by the Department of Defense.

So long as our country's top TV and print media continue to avoid challenging power for fear of losing access, there is every reason to expect many senior Defense Department leaders will continue to play this game of denial of access in order to effect compliant reports. As I've

shown throughout this report, there is ample open source information and reports all over the internet that would allow any individual – or reporter – to find the truth and report it. But heretofore few have.

As I note later in this report that there are a number of high ranking generals in the military today who are brilliant leaders and have the highest standards and integrity (giving me *hope* that there is a chance of reform in the future), so too there are some really fine journalists in both print and on-air media organizations. We need more experienced and honorable jourmos – and their parent organizations – to summon the courage to report wherever the truth leads and not simply regurgitate the bullet points handed out by some action officer. America needs you!

Casualty Figures

The number of total US casualties had risen to its highest rate of the war in October 2011, despite the infusion of 30,000 additional Soldiers 18 months ago. From 1 January 2010 to 30 September 2010, we suffered a total of 4,155 casualties (363 killed and 3,792 wounded). From 1 January 2011 to 30 September 2011 the enemy inflicted 4,662 casualties on American forces (353 killed and 4,309 wounded). To date I have not heard any senior official explain how we have suffered 507 more casualties so far this year despite the fact they told us last year the casualty rate spiked considerably above 2009 rates because of the increase in surge troops – nor did they explain that the 2009 rates themselves had risen as a product of the injection of thousands more troops over 2008.

An interesting observation that is difficult to explain: General Stanly McChrystal warned in the famously leaked 66-page report in September 2009 that we either surge more troops or we risked losing. In order to understand what led General McChrystal in part to arrive at this stark conclusion, let's look at the casualty rate comparing January-September 2008 to January-September 2009. What we discover is that in fact the total casualty rate jumped 48% from 2008 to 2009. When you look at the numbers making up that percentage increase, however, and compare it with the number of casualties we've suffered in the two years since, you discover something very difficult to reconcile with numerous public statements of success.

During the period January-September 2008 America suffered 930 total casualties (135 killed, 795 wounded). Covering the same period in 2009 the numbers were 1,764 (222 killed, 1,542 wounded). So General McChrystal raised considerable alarm in 2009 because we had suffered

834 more total casualties than the year before, but exactly one year later, that number had shot up well over double, increasing by 2,391. Now a year after that, the number of US casualties has risen yet again, this time by 507.

Thus, however one wants to selectively view the numbers, these totals are indisputable: In comparison of January-September 2009 when General McChrystal suggested we were in real peril to January-September 2011, here are the key measurements:

2009 2011 % Change DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT (As of 11 January 2012)

Overall acts of Violence: 15,219 27,740 + **82%**

Total Number IEDs (found + exploded): 5,184 11,074 +**113%**

US Casualties (killed and wounded) 1,764 4,662 +**164%**

In order to place these figures in context, it is instructive to examine the effects of the Iraq Surge of 2007 over an equal period. I do not have access to all the categories of information in the Jan-Sep timeframe for Iraq, but I can look at casualty rates and overall violence for over the nine month timeframe and during the same two year window.

The pinnacle of violence in the Iraq war took place in 2007. Examining US killed and wounded

in Iraq for the time period Jan-Sep 2007 and looking again in Jan-Sep 2009 – two years after the surge in which senior US leaders claimed success - we see that US casualties plummeted by

69%. Even more pronounced, note the graph depicting the dramatic drop-off of violence following the surge of US troops over the two years from 2007 to 2009:

2007 2009 % Change

US Casualties (killed and wounded) 6,251 1,930 - **69%**

The bottom line in terms of violence and casualties is that no matter how one wants to parse the numbers, it is clear that the Taliban has adjusted to our every move. By any objective analysis, the violence has indeed diminished in a few areas, but increased in others, as it has done throughout the war. But the most troubling category is US Casualties. Since 2009 when General McChrystal reported we were in real trouble, overall violence has almost doubled but our casualty rate has come close to tripling. How can the low numbers in 2009 represent near-disaster while the dramatically larger numbers in 2011 represent success?

On 10 July 2011 the New York Times ran a story about the pending retirement of General David Petraeus. In this article they reported that General Petraeus cited dropping casualty rates as evidence things were improving. Carlotta Gall reported, “Yet the general said signs of progress were beginning to appear. Insurgent attacks were down in May and June compared with the same months in 2010, and July is showing the same trend, he said. ‘This just means that they have less capacity; they have been degraded somewhat,’ he said of the insurgents. ‘This is the first real indicator — for the first time since 2006 — compared to the previous year, insurgent attack numbers are lower.’

Yet only weeks after General Petraeus’ comments, according to iCasualties.org, U.S. casualties from January to September 2010 were 4,155 killed and wounded, while the same period in 2011 saw 4,662 U.S. troops killed or wounded; an *increase* of over 500. General Petraeus had claimed in his 10 July 2011 interview with Carlotta Gall that casualty rates were falling and that the insurgency had been “degraded somewhat.” Even a cursory examination of the publicly available casualty data, however, reveals total US casualties were *up*, not down. An 18 December 2011 article in the National Journal also noted the contradiction: The Pentagon is pointing to the falling numbers of U.S. deaths to bolster its contention that the U.S.-led military alliance in Afghanistan has gained the upper hand over the Taliban and is now winning the conflict. It’s far from clear that momentum has conclusively shifted to the NATO coalition, but the

optimism of senior U.S. policymakers is a striking departure from their usually cautious public statements about the war. "I really think that for all the sacrifices that you're doing, the reality is that it is paying off, and that we're moving in the right direction," Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said last week while visiting U.S. forces in eastern Afghanistan. "We're winning this very tough conflict."

So in a possibly encouraging sign, there are some major media outlets that are beginning to publicly question the senior leaders' willingness to be straight with the American public on US casualty figures. Before we leave the subject of casualties, however, there is one other critical analysis to consider. As noted a few paragraphs above, in 2009 General McChrystal suggested our mission was in peril as evidenced by the growing casualty and violence rates in effect at the time. But when one examines the casualty rates over time we discover there is an interesting nexus, a direct correlation between that rise in losses and the rise in troop strength.

The Casualty-Troop Strength Nexus

The first time casualties and violence began to rise notably was in 2005. When the rise in casualties is compared to the increase in the number of American troops sent to Afghanistan on a year-by-year basis, we find an almost precise correlation. Meaning, the issue wasn't that the Taliban got stronger, the ANSF got weaker, or the Afghan government became even more corrupt – it was that as we inserted more US troops into Afghanistan we unwittingly provided the Taliban more targets to shoot at; more MRAP convoys to hit with IEDs; more forward operating bases to fire rockets into; more dismounted patrols to ambush. When the number of troops increased, we saw a concurrent rise in the number of US casualties, insurgent attacks, and IED attacks *to virtually the same percentage*, in each and every case. Thus, when we stopped adding more troops in 2010, and then withdrew 10,000 troops by the end of December 2011 – almost exactly 10% reduction in the total number of troops – we saw casualties and violence drop by the same figure! See below chart for the numbers (US troop numbers through 2010 provided by a 29 March 2011 Congressional Research Service report):

Number of Troops in Afghanistan at the height of each year:

2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011

21,100 23,300 26,400 35,600 69,000 102,000 102,000

Percentage Increase in troop strength from previous year:

2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011

15% 10% 12% 26% 49% 32% 0%

Next, the percentage of increase of US casualties, Afghan violence, and IEDs per year:

Casualties: 26% 26% 43% 9% 62% 57%

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the relationships, see the chart below that depicts the various categories of numbers and it becomes quickly evident that each time we increased the number of boots on the ground, the number of casualties shot up. With the imposition of more DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT (As of 11 January 2012)

aggressive tactics at the beginning of the McChrystal surge in early 2010, the percentage of US troops suffering casualties rose dramatically over previous troop increases.

WIA	KIA	Total	ratio of
		Casualties	cas to
			troop #
2004	218	52	270
2005	268	99	0.0173
2006	400	98	0.0213
2007	749	117	0.0328
2008	795	155	0.0267
2009	2142	317	0.0356
2010	5240	499	0.0562
2011	5124	418	0.0543