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STATEMENT OF

REAR ADMIRAL LOWER HALF BRUCE CLINGAN, UNITED STATES NAVY

DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

US CENTRAL COMMAND

BEFORE THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGING THREATS AND CAPABILITES

ON US CENTRAL COMMAND'S COUNTER NARCOTICS PROGRAM

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Chairman Roberts, Senator Reed, distinguished members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear before you today to discuss illegal narcotics trafficking in Afghanistan, its relation to narco-terrorism, and the programs we are developing to help counter this problem in collaboration with other agencies and governments. We appreciate Congress' support of the DoD counter-narcotics program in last year's supplemental appropriations bill, particularly in regard to our efforts related to Afghanistan.

As you know, U. S. Central Command is currently focused on defeating transnational terrorism and creating secure and stable environments in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, the broader CENTCOM area of responsibility encompasses the geographic and ideological heart of the global war on terror, a war without borders that spans all twenty-five countries in the region. The overt war on terror began in Afghanistan and a stable, democratic, economically viable state there will provide an alternative to the terrorist vision of a future characterized by oppression and prolonged conflict.

The narcotics problem in Afghanistan presents a special challenge. The international community and Afghan leadership, with the support of the United States and other Coalition allies, are addressing this challenge. The United Kingdom has the international lead in Afghanistan and with key Afghan leaders, including President Karzai and Minister of Interior Jalali, are beginning to take action against the narcotics trade. This problem requires a comprehensive, sustained effort championed by the Afghan government. Technical help and resources from the United Kingdom, United States and the international community will greatly enhance the Afghan government's effectiveness in combating this destructive trade.

The U.S. Central Command counter-narcotics program for Afghanistan and the surrounding Central Asian States is being developed in coordination with the State Department's efforts to improve law enforcement in Afghanistan and compliment the programs developed by the United Kingdom. In the short term, we will focus our efforts on direct assistance to the Afghan government that establishes a more effective counter-narcotics capability.

Central Command will focus the \$73 million dollars made available in the FY 2004 Supplemental for Afghanistan's counter- narcoterrorism program to disrupt the illicit drug trafficking that supports terrorist elements in Afghanistan. These groups include Taliban remnants, Al Qa'ida operatives and leaders, other extremist elements like Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hizb-I-Islami, as well as Afghan criminal gangs and transnational criminal elements.

The supplemental funding that Congress has approved will assist Coalition, host nation, contractor and other governmental agencies to:

- Monitor traditional overland smuggling routes from Afghanistan to the bordering nations through the construction of border control checkpoints and the employment of sensor technology.
- Equip Afghan counter-narcotics units and law enforcement agencies to conduct interdiction operations against narcotraffickers.
- Provide Afghanistan with the communications connectivity necessary to rapidly respond to narcoterrorist threats with synchronized interagency operations.
- Establish an interagency counter-narcotics intelligence fusion center to gather, collect, process and disseminate information leading to actionable intelligence. This will enhance operations by U.S. law enforcement officers, Provincial Reconstruction Team law enforcement

liaison cells, Coalition forces, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Crimes and Narcotics Center, United Kingdom law enforcement and intelligence agencies, and other governmental agencies represented in the region.

- Conduct an Afghan counter-narcoterrorism public awareness program in concert with the Department of State that helps the Afghan interior ministry develop a public affairs capability.
- Provide equipment and other support in concert with United Kingdom operations against narcoterrorist activities in Afghanistan.
- Conduct Maritime Interception Operations (MIO) and monitor vessels suspected of transporting narcotics and/or terrorists based on actionable intelligence.

U.S. CENTCOM views narcotrafficking as a significant obstacle to the political and economic reconstruction of Afghanistan. The revenue generated from poppy cultivation provides resources for extremists and the smuggling infrastructure that supports narcotics trafficking facilitates terrorist transportation and logistics. Local terrorist and criminal leaders have a vested interest in using the profits from narcotics to oppose the central government and undermine the security and stability of Afghanistan. As a result, the DoD counter-narcotics program in Afghanistan is a key element of our campaign against terrorism.

As important as our contribution to the DoD counter-narcotics program is, the underlying causes for the growth of narcotrafficking must be addressed. Farmers are hard pressed to cultivate cash crops that can provide revenue for their families and villages. Poppies are

notoriously easy to grow, and their market value makes it difficult for legitimate crops to compete. Additionally, narcoterrorists prey upon farmers who do not produce, contributing to a lack of confidence at the local level in the capability of the central government to provide adequate security. We must not only target poppy production and trafficking, we must also implement holistic initiatives that enhance the economy and agriculture to provide alternatives to the opium growers if we are to be ultimately successful in eliminating narcotics proliferation in Afghanistan and the region.

Thank you for the opportunity to share Central Command's strategy, objectives and plans.