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ADM. MIKE MULLEN: I have no opening remarks, so please –

Q: I was wondering if you had heard anything about the Afghan Defense Minister Wardak's proposal today for a joint coalition force and what your reaction is to that about the feasibility?

ADM. MULLEN: I actually – I just heard about it, and I haven't seen it in detail, so I don't know exactly what he's talking about. But I – it appears to be at least an idea for the Afghans and the Paks to work the border. And I think anything that is – that impacts better security on that border is a good thing. I haven't – again – I haven't seen the details, so I don't know what the specifics of the proposal would be. But I'm encouraged that a leader, you know, in Afghanistan has spoken out with this kind of idea. And I think it's this kind of idea and others, which focus on that border to create – the whole idea is to create better security there – is one that certainly very much potentially has merit.

Q: That said, part of this being – does this help get the pressure off of, you know, the Pakistan complaints about U.S. trailing across the border for attacks? I mean, is this an answer for that?

ADM. MULLEN: Don't know. I mean, there's somebody who has proposed something that's literally hours old. As in all these things, the devil will be in the details and actually in the ability to execute something like that should – to bring that kind of pressure – should this idea take root. Again, I'm more focused on – I mean, I think the idea and capabilities that we could bring to bear on both sides of that border are absolutely critical.

Q: You didn't mention too much about the East Asia situation. What's your view about the Taiwan situation right now? Is U.S. arms sales to Taiwan is really important to the region?

ADM. MULLEN: We're committed to continuing to support Taiwan in terms of arms sales. And we've done that, and done that publicly recently. My overall view is stability's a good thing. I think that from America's point of view, we continue to – as I'm sure you know – support the one China policy. We need to sustain peace and stability there, and while doing that, you know, we're committed to what we have – we're committed to the relationship and to the parts of that relationship, which include providing the kind of weapons support, in terms of sales, that we mutually agree that we're going to move forward on. Yes, ma'am?

Q: Carrie Bodinero with CNN. Last week, General McKiernan told reporters that he wants an additional four brigades in Afghanistan. And if getting those troops continues to be a challenge, and if they're not readily deployable, what else can the military do on the ground to help turn around the situation in Afghanistan?

ADM. MULLEN: We've – I'm aware of General McKiernan's overall requirement. I think I said in there, there's an additional roughly 10,000 that we see, and a total of – that's a total of about four brigades. And there are other forces that support those brigades, which gets us to roughly an overall number of about 15 or 16,000 – six or seven of which are already committed. What that speaks to is the need to have more – to get more forces there. I'm – as I've indicated – hopeful that conditions in Iraq will continue to evolve in the way they have and that we'll be able to reduce the number of forces that we have there.

That clearly has the potential for freeing up forces to – additional forces to do two things. One, send to Afghanistan, and two, build this dwell time that I was talking about. So, from that standpoint, I think we understand at least for now what the requirements are based on the insurgency that we have, and as General McKiernan, who's taken up – taken command recently, as best he's able to identify.

Q: May I just follow up?

ADM. MULLEN: Sure.

Q: Last week, the defense secretary stated that he doesn't – he disagrees with your assertion that the United States isn't winning in Afghanistan. And I'm just wondering if you can elaborate on that disagreement, and basically your assessment on whether the United States is winning the war in Afghanistan.

ADM. MULLEN: Actually, I think as I saw him state – and he was on the other side of the world and I haven't spoken to him – but I think what his response was wasn't disagreement, as he thought it was more complex than that. And it's an enormously complex problem. I certainly – when I testified, my intent was to express my concern about the growing insurgency, the growing level of violence, the need to commit in these other sectors – not just on the military side – the need to commit internationally.

And the message was, you know, my message there is, I am concerned about the way this is going. And so that was the purpose of that particular – my particular statement there, and I still believe that. And what I said was, I don't think we're winning; I think we can. And therein lies,

I think, a focus on – what I'm anxious to do is to continue to try to sustain the focus on this growing problem that I think we as a country, and we need to understand and address, and we as an alliance in NATO, as well as the other countries, the other – the totality of the 42 countries need to focus on. Peter.

Q: Sir, the incident over the weekend in Pakistan the Pentagon now says that two servicemen were killed in the incident. I know, early days still, but any indication of whether they were targets of this attack, or were there other high profile people at the hotel who might have been targeted of this attack?

ADM. MULLEN: First of all, I want to – to all those who lost members, you know, who tragically lost people in that terrible bombing – express my condolences, thoughts, and prayers. We did lose two service members. And as far as I've been told, I think there's a – there was one additional American at this point. And, in particular, from the military perspective, you know, my thought – I mean, from where I am certainly – my thoughts and prayers.

I have – I've received no information to indicate that any specific individual was targeted. As I think has been stated in several articles thus far, my staff stayed at that hotel in this recent trip. So – and where – what I find in those hotels is typically that's where staff and people are oftentimes, both billeted, and in some cases, working, because we have staff, we have so many people that are in and out of there. So the best of my understanding right now is there's no specific – there was not specific targets – meaning individuals – and that in fact, they were there for a variety of requirements that I guess someone would certainly understand. I'm just not there – I'm just not familiar with that.

Q: Admiral, there's reports again today, as there have been recently, on Pakistani forces having shot a U.S. helicopter in that border area. Is that – can you shed any light on those reports, and is there a cause for concern more generally there, that as tension rises in that area, that there could be an incident where Pakistani forces end up shooting possibly further casualties –

ADM. MULLEN: I've received no indication that those events actually occurred. And certainly, very dangerous area. We've got forces on the Afghan side countering that insurgency. Obviously, there's a significant number of Pak mil, as well as frontier corp forces on the Pak side. So there certainly is potential, but I – part of the reason I am engaged with General Kiyani is to make sure we understand as much as we possibly can about each other's operations and that there is no intent on the part of certainly our forces, to create a situation where we're getting in a fire fight with Pak mil.

Q: What do you make of Pak – I'm Frank Stoggs with the National Public Radio affiliate in Los Angeles.

ADM. MULLEN: Hi, Frank.

Q: Pakistan though did threaten to shoot American troops at one point over the last few days?

ADM. MULLEN: What I saw was a correction on the part of the major general, I think, who made that statement that essentially said that, certainly they have the right to defend themselves. Initially, what I saw in some of the press anyway, he was reported to have said something along the lines. What I saw him do was correct that to what he actually said, which was, they reserve the right to defend themselves. And that's very common for any country and any military.

Q: What most worries you militarily right now, in terms of an event in the world, or an event in a particular place, as the head of the U.S. military?

ADM. MULLEN: I've focused heavily on the border region in Pakistan. Our relationship with Pakistan has to go far beyond the border, meaning, I think it needs to be comprehensive, it needs to be predictable, sustained, and it needs to be over many years. But, because al Qaeda is there, because al Qaeda and the Taliban are there – sorry, al Qaeda is there, its leadership is there; we know that. And it continues to plan against the West, including against our homeland. So that's the most serious threat that I see right now, and that's the one that concerns me the most.

They are also both planning and training – Taliban and al Qaeda – coming across the border into Afghanistan, killing Americans and killing coalition soldiers. And at that same time, there are insurgents who are very focused on Pakistan alone, living there as well.

Q: Does the financial meltdown affect your job in the military in any way?

ADM. MULLEN: Certainly the shape of the Pakistani – you mean our –

Q: Our financial meltdown.

ADM. MULLEN: Oh.

Q: The little thing that's captured the headlines, the little \$700 billion bailout that's on the table now.

ADM. MULLEN: That's – actually a lot of other people are working on that. I've got enough challenges.

Q: Does it affect your job, or how you're doing your job, or potential funding of the military in any way?

ADM. MULLEN: Well, I – I mean, I could prognosticate on that for a long time, you know, where it goes, how severe, all those things. Those are factors in the future that are out there. But I certainly – I'm very, very comfortable that our president and our Congress has done all they can to fund our needs as we fight these two wars. And I – and I am – and I believe that as – in some cases, as controversial as they are, there are different views about them.

But in the end, you know, that our government, our Congress, is an extension of the American people. And we have – the military's been asked to carry out a mission. It's a very dangerous mission. We're sacrificing people, losing their lives, lives changed forever, and that the American people are supporting our men and women in uniform and funding it as it is needed to be funded in order to carry out this mission.

MR. : Time for one more question, folks.

Q: So you made several comments during your remarks, one about the poppy fields and about the need to address them. So my question is, the poppy eradication forces obviously are not doing their job. I mean, you have Marines going through the Helmand province marching right through poppy fields doing nothing to touch them. If this is such a big thing, I mean, I guess I'm curious about when did it become the factor?

ADM. MULLEN: It's been a big – it's been a big issue for several years. We – the poppy population in number of hectares is continuing to grow, although this year, it actually was down fairly significantly, on the order of, I think – and you have to check me on this, Gary – but I think 15 to 20 percent in terms of last year. Combination of things: some eradication, some weather, et cetera. But it's still fairly significant when you look at where the poppy population is now, versus where it was in 2002. It's dramatically increased.

My concern, from the military perspective, is it does fund terrorists. And those terrorists are killing men and women in uniform. And obviously, there is no easy answer. It's a very – it's a complex, vexing, controversial problem. And, again, what I said in there, I'll just repeat, that we get to a point where we take that crop away, there needs to be another crop for that farmer, in order to feed and provide for his family.

Q: Can I ask a follow-up on that?

ADM. MULLEN: Sure.

Q: Is that – is it in light of the uprising, the more spikes in violence and attacks that are going on –

ADM. MULLEN: That's part of it.

Q: Because this is fairly new comments on poppies –

ADM. MULLEN: Well, it's – I mean, it's been there. It has been there. It is – to me, it is directly funding the insurgency in Afghanistan; there's no question about that. So in that regard, we have got to deal with it, we, the big we. Not the United States, not the military, everybody's got to focus on this. And where there are different views, I have all that, but we need to bring those views together and have a plan that essentially eliminates it.

Q: Thanks, sir.

ADM. MULLEN: Thank you.

Q: Thank you for your time.

ADM. MULLEN: Yeah. Glad to do it