



Commander, ISAF Joint Command Remarks ~as prepared
Regional Command - East Transfer of Authority
14 June 2010, Bagram Afghanistan

مشارکت

This morning, I first want to acknowledge our great partners and servants of the Afghan people.

The sons and daughters of this magnificent nation are the courageous warriors across the ranks of the Afghan National Army, the National Police, and the National Directorate of Security. They voluntarily make service to nation their lives' duty. They fight and sacrifice everything to give hope to their brothers, sisters, children, and to future generations.

Scap – I know it has been an enormous undertaking. On your watch the task grew larger by the month. Now, over 30,000 people from thirteen nations around the globe are part of the team; nearly 200 civilian experts helping the Afghan people; eight agriculture business development teams; nineteen district support teams, and fourteen provincial reconstruction teams representing the Czech Republic, New Zealand, Turkey, and the United States. And Regional Command East looks forward to the arrival of our Korean partners in July.

The size of the Afghan National Security Force formations you have supported has nearly doubled. And the nearly ten million people across Regional Command East continue to see growing opportunities. They see better crops, more viable agriculture business, and trade that continues to expand, to become more stable and productive. They see more of their children getting an education that can help them be contributing members of this nation and the world.

And while helping do all that, you and your 'troopers executed the most difficult and important maneuver of this campaign – changing from an insurgent-centric strategy to a people-centric strategy, investing every effort in protecting the Afghan people.

Only the very best can lead change of that magnitude. To pull it off, you have to have the deepest respect and unyielding commitment of those soldiers across your ranks.

Scap, you and your 'troopers have that respect – respect of your Afghan partners and the international coalition, and respect of the Afghan people you have helped. Because of you and your 'troops, Afghans today see before them the best chance for peace and prosperity that they have had in over three decades – in spite of futile efforts of the insurgents to deprive them of those opportunities.

The insurgents – they are the antithesis of all things good.

Given a path to peace, they destroy.

Given the opportunity to encourage strong, productive families, they bomb wedding celebrations and brutally and maliciously murder and maim their own Afghan brothers and sisters.

Given opportunity to provide an Afghan child a life of hope, they slaughter him, instead, and hang his body on a tree: a dead child hanging from a tree – that is the insurgent vision for Afghanistan.

Given young men seeking direction – the insurgents sadistically guide them to self-destruction in empty fields, as they did right here at Bagram late last month.

Theirs are acts of inhumanity, acts of the uncivilized.

But the conversation of peace and hope expands – expands without the insurgents. And the Afghan people are deciding that it will continue to expand.

We are listening. The world is listening. The world is listening and watching.

Some question Afghanistan's progress. They question its potential, thinking it might slip back to the death grip of insurgents. Those people fail to take into account the courage, commitment, and resilience of Afghans. They are not taking into account the opportunities to welcome Afghan brothers home to families, communities, and peace.

They fail to take into account 40,000 more coalition 'troops arriving this year, and the collective resolve of forty-four partnered nations unified with a just and common cause.

They fail to take into account the international community's commitment to a long-term partnership with Afghanistan, a partnership that goes well-beyond security and promotes economic development and improves government capacity.

And they fail to consider magnificent formations of heroes – like the 82nd Airborne Division and the Afghan National Security Forces, whose capacity grows every day.

Scap - Thank you. Thank you and God bless you and your family and the All Americans you led during this critical time.

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General Campbell and the 101st Airborne Division – Air Assault – welcome back to Afghanistan to continue the work you started at the very beginning in 2001.

President Karzai recently visited the United States. There he met our wounded, paid respects to our fallen, and at Fort Campbell he thanked Screaming Eagle families for deploying their loved ones to help the Afghan people.

After meeting the President, one Screaming Eagle Soldier said, "I'm going to support the Afghan people. Everything secondary to that is just an obstacle . . . [and] we'll overcome that," he said.

John – get after the obstacles undermining hope, and help the Afghan people replace fear with trust and confidence.

And as your own Screaming Eagle Soldier committed himself, keep protecting and supporting the Afghan people.

Thank you. Air Assault.