



TRANSCRIPT

MEDIA STAKEOUT FOLLOWING SRSG NICHOLAS HAYSOM'S BRIEFING TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL

New York – Monday, 22 June 2015

(near verbatim)

Participants:

- United Nations Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Nicholas Haysom
- Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the United Nations, Zahir Tanin (*Comments not transcribed here.*)

Nicholas Haysom: Thank you very much. In essence I think what I had wanted to communicate to the Council is that although Afghanistan has made some progress, the fact of the matter is that it's in a difficult situation.

It continues to need international support and the continued attention of the Security Council. And we say that in the context in which there are obviously other compelling issues on the international agenda and obviously a temptation to focus on those to the exclusion of Afghanistan. I think – we certainly advise – that would be premature.

We also took note, as did many members of the Council, of the terror attack on parliament this morning, which we've seen as an attack on a popular institution of the people of Afghanistan.

And we certainly have – that is, the United Nations – condemned the attack.

And we note that, although no damage was done to the institutions or the members of the institutions, once again we saw civilians taking the brunt of the attack. Over 40 have been injured and at least two have been killed.

And certainly I have been emphasising the importance of peace as a key condition for the long-term prosperity and stability of not only Afghanistan but the region. And that although there are some positives in the general environment at the moment, the key issue which is lacking is proper formal engagement between authorized representatives of armed groups and the Government.

And although there have been a number of events in which the parties have been able to state publicly their opinions, that doesn't amount to a formal structured engagement or negotiation on the conditions for an agenda for peace.

So those are just my general remarks.

Unidentified Journalist (speaking to Afghan Ambassador): You spoke about thousands of foreign terrorists coming into the country. Are they affiliated with ISIS in Syria and Iraq or are they locally grown those you described as ISIS affiliates?

Haysom: They are largely groups which have been displaced from Waziristan as a result of the Pakistani military campaign in North Waziristan and beyond and that has forced these foreign fighter groups into Afghanistan where they are presumably hoping to use the security vacuum to settle there more permanently. And we've seen their presence in some of the areas which have been notably unstable, which have previously been areas of safety such as Badakshan and Kunduz.

The issue which I put before the Council is that increasingly Afghanistan, one of the 10 poorest countries in the world, is finding itself in the forefront of dealing with terrorists whose origins are the neighbours and possibly whose eventual destination are its neighbours. And I think Afghanistan is entitled to request greater collaboration and support in dealing with what is a regional shared threat.

Matthew Russel Lee of Inner City Press: I wanted to ask about Kunduz and just what you can say. You said that in your testimony that there is a challenge to govt security control. So is it beyond hit and run attacks? And also at least one of the members chided the report of the SG, which I guess is your report as well, for not linking enough to Al-Qaida, as being directly about Al-Qaida in the report. Can you address that? And what do you think of that criticism?

Haysom: Well I'm not sure what the Al-Qaida connection is. I mean I think, in general, we have to be much more precise in our understanding of what is ISIL, what is a foreign fighter, what is Al-Qaida? They are quite precise and quite different even though it's possible to make connections between them.

I think over the last three or four days there's been concerted fighting in districts quite close to Kunduz city. As we understand it, the armed groups have managed to capture temporarily some of the areas there. We anticipate they will be pushed out again. But it is disturbing because Kunduz is obviously such a significant and strategic centre.

Unidentified Journalist: The attack on Parliament, do you think – what does it mean for talks with the Taliban? Some people are saying it's over. It doesn't seem from your testimony – you seem to be saying that – what is – I mean is it just that or is it just to send a message on a particular day or does it – it seems to be kind of a pretty bold step in the sense of speaking with them.

Haysom: I think the remark I made in the Council was that there is no doubt that the intensification of the conflict that we've seen this year, on the one hand underlines the importance of peace, on the other hand makes it more difficult, and it creates a climate in which the voices which would oppose peace are as loud as the voices which would promote peace.

Unidentified Journalist: My question is about the cultivation of the poppies. Given it has been a permanent feature of reports on Afghanistan, how serious is the cultivation of poppies still in Afghanistan. Are these terrorists still controlling areas where they can cultivate poppies and market it to the world?

Haysom: Well I think both the United Nations and more broadly the international community regards the poppy cultivation as serious and current reports would suggest that the yield this year – which is both the area under cultivation and the yield from that area – has increased over this year. And there's no doubt that generalized insecurity provides the best conditions for the growing of poppy.

Other than that it continues to remain an object for – or a subject of collaboration of the international community to restrict the flow of opium into the world. Of course it's an area in which one is required to act not just on the cultivation but also on the trafficking and on the consumption. So it really does require an international effort which is bigger than that which Afghanistan can put together on its own. Thank you.

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