



TRANSCRIPT OF SRSG NICHOLAS HAYSOM INTERVIEW WITH UNITED NATIONS RADIO

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(near verbatim)

Nicholas Haysom: Well I think Afghanistan's facing many problems. There's been economic contraction as a result of the withdrawal of the international presence. It's facing a tough security situation, and I think for many Afghans, as I mentioned in the Council, they have a memory of three decades of war and a future that they can't see very carefully. And so many look very closely at how the future is unfolding and there are undoubtedly many who are despondent about that future.

Essentially the point I was trying to make to the Security Council was that it is better for the international community to invest in Afghanistan now, to continue to support Afghanistan with resources, and with diplomatic and other support, than disengage from Afghanistan and have to deal with the refugee problem as a result.

Diane Penn: And you mentioned the withdrawal of international presence there. And of course that means that the national security forces and the defense forces have stepped up their responsibility. How would you say that is going?

Haysom: Well, there's no doubt that they've been tested by a much more intense onslaught from the insurgency. The insurgency itself wanting to see whether the Afghan National Security Forces can exist and cope without the large presence of international military. Quite frankly, they've held their ground, but they've also been tested. They've been required to operate on many fronts simultaneously and I think over the year we've seen them improve. But we've also seen significant reverses. I would add that in almost all areas that they have lost over the course of the year they've managed to retake, but it's never quite clear for how long they'll be able to hold it.

Penn: Earlier this year, the Government and the Taliban held talks in Pakistan. It appears that they're on hold at the moment.

Nicholas Haysom: Our starting point that Afghanistan deserves peace after three decades of war and my engagement with Afghans strongly suggests that Afghans across the board want peace and there's certainly an argument that peace is possible.

We were encouraged by the direct talk between the government and the Taliban. We're disappointed of course that they've broken down, but we would understand that breakdown to be temporary, both related to hiatus in Afghan-Pakistan collaboration, but also because of the internal issues facing the Taliban. And we would recognize that the Taliban itself needs to come to the table, confident and prepared, to take the risks which political negotiations necessarily involve. We think it'll take few more weeks before those will resume.

Penn: And what's UNAMA role in this?

Haysom: We have been engaging with all the parties. We consistently and publicly call for those peace talks, and call for direct peace talks. We believe Afghans have to find a way of living together in peace and harmony. And for that to happen, Afghans have to talk to Afghans. And so we strongly encourage them. I certainly met with all sides, including the Taliban, to pass on that message. We offer to host and to facilitate any meetings. But that depends both on parties and those who are backing the parties.

Penn: And now you're in New York, of course. You were here for the Security Council meeting. But you're also here for several other high-level meetings. This week too is another occasion for you as well. I think it comes up to one year that you've been appointed as head of the UN Mission in Afghanistan. Is there anything that stands out for you, or any experience, you'd like to share with our listeners?

Haysom: Well, there have been no big events over the year. We have not suffered attacks to any of our staff, thank god. We haven't had to go through an elections, which are normally a period of pretty intense good offices role. But for me I think the most important thing is that I travel extensively throughout Afghanistan, meeting NGOs, women's groups, elders, Ulema, and engage with them and listen to them, listen to their concerns, listen to their aspirations, and that for me is always a motivating factor.

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