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AFGHANISTAN STUDY GROUP REPORT

“REVITALIZING OUR EFFORTS, RETHINKING OUR STRATEGIES”

Highlights from the January 30, 2008 Report [available at www.thePresidency.org]

This bipartisan group, established in spring 2007, and co-chaired by General James L. Jones (ret.) and Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering, consisted of policy experts and former government officials.

The report asserts that the United States and the international community have tried to win the struggle in Afghanistan with too few military forces, insufficient economic aid, and without a clear and consistent comprehensive strategy to fill the power vacuum outside Kabul and counter the combined challenges of reconstituted Taliban and al-Qaeda forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan, a runaway opium economy, and the stark poverty faced by most Afghans.

Achieving success in Afghanistan will require a sustained, multi-year commitment to make the war in Afghanistan – and its reconstruction – a higher U.S. foreign policy priority. Although substantial obstacles remain, the strategic consequences of failure in Afghanistan would be severe for long-term U.S. interests in the region and for security at home. Therefore, the “light footprint” in Afghanistan needs to be replaced with the “right footprint” by the U.S. and its allies. It is time to revitalize our efforts and rethink our strategies to stabilize Afghanistan to ensure our commitment level is commensurate with the threat posed by possible failure in Afghanistan.

The Report Calls For:

- Decoupling Iraq and Afghanistan in the U.S. legislative process and in the management of these conflicts in the Executive branch.
- Appointing a U.S. government Special Envoy to Afghanistan.
- Establishing an Eminent Persons Group that would develop a long-term, coherent, international strategy for Afghanistan in coordination with the Afghan government.

Some of the Afghanistan Study Group’s Other Recommendations Include:

- Appoint a high level international coordinator under a UN mandate.
- Set up a NATO compensation fund for civilian deaths, injuries or property damage resulting from its military operations.
- Develop a coordinated strategy in support of President Karzai’s national reconciliation efforts.
- Create a regional plan to effectively target the risks coming out of the border area with Pakistan.
- Sequence the core tools of counter-narcotics policy and integrate counter-narcotics and counter-insurgency operations where appropriate.
- Increase and accelerate investment in development – especially infrastructure and industry development – in all provinces. Encourage the Afghan government to appoint an Afghan development “czar”.
- Initiate a regional process to engage Afghanistan’s neighbors (including Iran) and other potential regional partners in the future sustainable development of Afghanistan.