



NEWS RELEASE

ISAF Joint Command - Afghanistan



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For Immediate Release

Commander, ISAF Joint Command speech

The following prepared remarks were given by Lt. Gen. David M. Rodriguez, International Security Assistance Force Joint Command commander, during the Regional Command South Transfer of Authority ceremony Tuesday.

KABUL, Afghanistan (Nov. 3) – It's great to be here this morning for the Regional Command South's transfer of authority. I see before me, gifted leaders and troopers from RC-South and I see hope – *omid*, and *dastaward* – accomplishment. And I see the partnership – that makes both possible.

Over the course of this past one year, the Afghan National Army, Police, and National Directorate of Security have matured as if they had been working together for many years.

The change has been remarkable – the gains in sheer numbers, in capability of individual soldiers, and in the readiness to lead combined team operations to protect the people.

With regard to the expansion of government, the change there too has been incredible. In these past six months alone, the number of personnel serving the people in the government of Kandahar has nearly doubled.

There is enormous potential in that great Afghan military and civilian force. And the progress has really just begun. The future is very hopeful.

So while it is not for me to thank you – the Afghan people will do that in the near future – I want to say how grateful I am that Regional Command South had the benefit of your wonderful partnership.

Nick – it has been a challenging and – I know – rewarding year. You have accomplished what many thought impossible but we all knew was essential.

As always in our profession, success rests on leadership and teamwork. You have led an amazing team in the Nick Carter style. Your energy, willingness to subordinate everything to the mission, and your depth of courage to take the difficult and often lonely stand, to make the tough decisions... all of that has guided a team to accomplish so much.

You have supported your Afghan partners to bring the start of stability to 2.5 million people in Kandahar, Zabul, Uruzgan and before that, in Helmand...that is, stability built on an emerging equilibrium among the security forces, the government and the people.

I mentioned Helmand earlier. Newcomers don't really know – and even the old timers can forget – that both main efforts in Operation Omid to date have been led by the combined team in front of us.

Operation Moshtarak in Helmand was planned and launched by this headquarters and their Afghan partners.

At the same time, the team here was looking ahead to Hamkari in Kandahar and standing up a new command in RC-SW with the split of their area of responsibility.

All this while simultaneously integrating four new coalition brigades and helping to integrate over 6,000 Afghan security forces.

It was seamless. Every part of what they did has been successful.

It wasn't easy and it wasn't free.

The command takes home with them the memory of 162 lost warriors and hundreds of Afghan security forces.

I am very certain they will live forever in the hearts and memories of the men and women who served with them.

And I am certain that their immeasurable sacrifice has made a difference in bringing the Afghan people closer to the future they desire and deserve. They gave their lives to make others' better – an incredible legacy for others to live up to.

Nick, you and your team have done everything we could ask of you – done it all spectacularly well and with the sort of style, grit and finesse for which your countrymen are so famous. Very, very well done. And thank you.

General Terry – welcome back to Afghanistan. It is good to see you here again.

You and your staff are clearly ready to shoulder this critical mission, to launch a new and essential phase of operations in Kandahar, Uruzgan and Zabul...to expand the gains made by the team before you.

Keep the partnerships strong – expand them. With your support, it will be the security forces, the government leadership, and mostly the people who will find solutions that will turn hope and growing confidence into reality.

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