

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 16, 2009

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### ALAN KHAZEI CALLS FOR A NEW APPROACH TO AFGHANISTAN

CAMBRIDGE – Hundreds of people turned out today to listen to United States Senate candidate and City Year co-founder Alan Khazei deliver a powerful speech on Afghanistan. He spoke to the assembled audience about the challenges the U.S. faces there, the need to re-evaluate our strategy at this vital juncture, and presented his ten-point plan on how we should move forward.

“It should concern all of us enough that we stop, at this critical moment, to reexamine our mission, why we’re there and how we achieve our national interests,” Khazei said. “If I were your Senator today, this is the speech I would give from the Senate floor. Because the decisions we make about the Afghan war will affect every aspect of our future.”

Khazei praised the work of America’s servicemen and women, and said that we were right initially to pursue Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. But he criticized the evolution of the American mission from one of counter-terrorism to nation-building.

“We’ve lost our way, strayed from our mission, and now we are asking our troops to build a nation in a place that is laden with corruption and has never had a strong central government. This isn’t in our interest as a nation, and it’s not fair to our troops.”

Khazei cited several recent studies which attempt to shed light on the cost of waging continued war in Afghanistan. According to the New York Times, it costs approximately one million dollars a year to station a soldier there. Furthermore, according to the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, when the long term costs of war including debt service and veterans’ care are included, Afghanistan is estimated to cost \$130 billion for every year of battle. Khazei also drew attention to the human costs of continued engagement.

“We also need to remember that the immediate cost is being paid, disproportionately, by just a few: the 1% of Americans with family in the military,” Khazei added. “They are bearing the burden of constant redeployment, separated families, and incalculable loss.”

Having delivered his analysis of the situation, Khazei presented a concrete, 10-point plan for Afghanistan. Together, the points attempt to grapple with the challenging situation by reducing our troop levels, refocusing our mission on counter-terrorism, fighting corruption in the Karzai government, and recommitting ourselves to Afghan development and the welfare of veterans and their families.

Khazei closed by citing the story of Mike Pereira, a 27 year old Iraq and Afghanistan veteran who faced numerous, daunting challenges on his return to civilian life and met them by becoming involved in support service for his fellow veterans.

Khazei praised Mr. Pereira’s continued service: “Mike is a true patriot and hero. Mike Pereira reminds us all, of the human cost of this war, but also that with an undaunted spirit, we can find our way back home.”

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*Alan Khazei, founder of Be The Change, Inc. and co-founder of City Year, which inspired the creation of President Clinton's national and community service program AmeriCorps, is a nonprofit leader and lifelong public servant. In 2006, US News and World Report named Alan one of America's 25 Best Leaders, and the Boston Globe Magazine identified him as one of 11 Bostonians Changing the World.*

Below is a transcript of Alan Khazei's speech:

**A NEW APPROACH TO AFGHANISTAN**  
**Remarks Prepared for Delivery**

**Harvard University**  
**Barker Center**  
**Thompson Room**  
**12 Quincy Street**  
**Cambridge, MA**

**2:00 PM**

**11/16/09**

Good afternoon – and thank you for welcoming me here at Harvard for this important conversation.

I've run this campaign so you could see what kind of Senator I would be:

A Senator who will tell you what he thinks and believes we need a new politics, a new agenda and a fundamentally new approach to how we solve our problems.

I've called this new philosophy – Big Citizenship.

It's in that spirit that I'm here today to talk to you about what we should be doing in Afghanistan.

It should concern all of us enough that we stop, at this critical moment, to reexamine our mission, why we're there and how we achieve our national interests.

If I were your Senator today, this is the speech I would give from the Senate floor.

Because the decisions we make about the Afghan war will affect every aspect of our future.

We went to Afghanistan to destroy the Al Qaeda terrorists who attacked our homeland on 9/11.

It was the right war, at the right time, and our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines did a remarkable job.

As of a year ago, the director of the CIA reported we had effectively removed the last remnants of Al Qaeda from Afghanistan.

He highlighted the need to pursue them in other countries, including Pakistan.

But, over time, our commitment had changed, and our brave sons and daughters, who put their lives on the line to defend our freedom against the terrorists, were asked to fight a new war—a much harder and longer war, not against Al Qaeda, but against the Taliban and other Afghan insurgents.

We've lost our way, strayed from our mission, and now we are asking our troops to build a nation in a place that is laden with corruption and has never had a strong central government.

This isn't in our interest as a nation, and it's not fair to our troops.

And as we have lost our way in Afghanistan, I know people are hurting here at home.

You've lost your jobs, your homes, and your retirement savings.

Too many are scanning the internet and newspapers looking for work.

If you're a student, you are wondering if there is going to be a job for you once you graduate.

If you're a small business owner, you are struggling to stay in business when health care costs are rising more than 30% a year.

If you are a military family, you are wondering how many tours your loved ones will have to endure, whether you will be called up and whether your son or daughter, wife or husband, mom or dad will come home safely.

And for years we have been losing our brave family members overseas in protracted wars in which often the rationale for, goals and costs of war have not been clearly explained to the American people and the citizens of Massachusetts.

And so, today, I want to talk about how we lost our way in Afghanistan.

About the tremendous cost of this war, why we need a new approach to pursue our national interests, and my ten point strategy for how to do that.

Here are my overall recommendations:

We need to return to our original mission: Destroy Al Qaeda and ensure Afghanistan does not become a haven for terrorists. To pursue that mission, we do not need more troops in Afghanistan, and over time, we should draw down our forces and bring them home.

**We need to set a timetable whereby we transition counter insurgency operations from American and International forces to the Afghan government.**

We need to focus on Pakistan where Al Qaeda is now headquartered and because Pakistan has nuclear weapons.

# #

General McChrystal has developed a plan to fight a counterinsurgency campaign, but President Obama needs to decide if a counter insurgency campaign is really in our national interest.

Pulling back from Afghanistan militarily is not about reducing pressure on Al Qaeda but actually freeing up resources to press the fight harder:

This is not about fighting the terrorists less – it's about fighting them smarter, pressing them harder, and seeking them out where they have fled around the globe.

We must defeat the terrorists.

I don't believe we can best do that by putting so many resources into re-building one single country, halfway around the globe.

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Of course, it's up to the President to determine the strategy in Afghanistan and the region.

But the Senate, as designed in our Constitution, has a unique role in shaping U.S. foreign policy.

And I believe that you, as citizens, should know how your potential next Senator thinks about America's role in the world.

Now, we all know the Administration is deeply involved in reviewing policy, strategy and troop levels for Afghanistan.

And I appreciate the President is taking his time to decide what will likely be the most momentous decision of his presidency.

Over the past several weeks, I have consulted with a number of leading experts in developing my thinking as to what our policy in Afghanistan should be.

I am a student of history. I've traveled to more than 30 countries. I've met with government, business and citizen leaders who are making a difference on the ground, from India to Africa, Europe to the Middle East, Russia and China.

The challenges of this century are fundamentally different from those of the last -- because we are living in an era of problems without borders and their consequences belong to everyone on Earth.

Global climate change is tied to economic growth is tied to clean energy is tied to security is tied back to climate change.

We can't solve these tangled global challenges by going it alone, nor by military means alone.

This web of challenges requires new thinking and a new approach.

As Lincoln said – in another time of great crisis – “The dogmas of the quiet past, are inadequate to the stormy present. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.”

# #

Now, what President Obama has accomplished in ten short months is extraordinary.

Before he took office, our nation’s accumulated errors in the Middle East, our misguided strategy of pre-emptive warfare and our arrogant insistence on going it alone had left America’s reputation in tatters.

Barack Obama has largely restored America’s moral footing. He has reminded the world what this country stands for at its best, and why our political ideals endure.

At the same time, I take inspiration from Senator Kennedy’s conviction and courage on matters of foreign policy. His vote against the Iraq war was his proudest. Not because he didn’t want to defend our country, he did, but because he didn’t believe the hype about the connection between 9/11 and Iraq.

Senator Kennedy also understood the connection between misguided wars abroad and the devastating impact at home. The crushing price of trillion-dollar wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has driven up the national deficit and debt. The wars also played a major role in pushing up the price of oil from \$27 a barrel in 2003 to over \$115 a barrel to 2008 which led to skyrocketing gas prices, weakened our economy and contributed to last year’s economic meltdown.

The last time we borrowed from abroad to fund a war, it was the American Revolution.

And now we’re paying interest to the Chinese, so we can send soldiers and Marines we cannot spare on the wrong mission. Just as troubling, we’re ignoring the true costs we will incur long-term – costs that will bleed our economy dry over decades.

And most importantly, there is no issue more “domestic” than the suffering of our service members and the ones they love.

Sisters and brothers, uncles and aunts, friends and fellow citizens have come home from this war, often after multiple deployments, gravely injured – to a country unprepared to give them the care and support they deserve.

You have the right to know what the true cost of this war will be – in both American lives and national treasure. You have the right to know what the goals are, what our strategy is to achieve them, and how long it will realistically take.

And we have learned, ultimately, if we cannot convince you, the citizens, to support our involvement in a foreign conflict, it is not sustainable and will not succeed.

So what are those costs?

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We are now closing in on 90,000 American casualties since combat began in 2001. This includes fatalities, wounded, diseased, injured, and medically evacuated from the theatre. There have been 1,000 wounded in Afghanistan in just the past 3 months.

In addition to the human cost of this war, yesterday, the New York Times reported the effort in Afghanistan costs us one million dollars a soldier.

And recent work from the Kennedy School shows the full cost of war. In Iraq, we have spent well over \$1 trillion dollars in cash. But the true cost to America will exceed \$3 trillion when we add additional expenses that include the cost of medical care and disability for veterans, replacing military equipment and money borrowed to finance the war.

In Afghanistan, we currently spend about \$3.5 billion per month and this could grow with increased troops to \$65 billion a year.

The full long-term costs of fighting the war in Afghanistan are expected to be more than double that amount or over \$130 billion a year.

\$130 billion a year more than covers the cost of universal health care. If we paid down the deficit with this money, the interest we would save could finance enough job creation tax credits to create almost 900,000 jobs or provide Pell Grants for almost 900,000 college students.

The tremendous cost of escalating this war will be paid by all of us. In higher taxes, slower economic growth, looming deficits – and in not being able to pay for health care, education, and jobs because we are spending the money on a bad bet in Afghanistan.

We also need to remember that the immediate cost is being paid, disproportionately, by just a few: the 1% of Americans with family in the military.

They are bearing the burden of constant redeployment, separated families, and incalculable loss.

We owe it to them to evaluate the rationale for the current mission in Afghanistan before we commit more troops.

# #

As we all know, the U.S. originally went into Afghanistan in response to 9/11, to root out the terrorists responsible for the attacks. To destroy Al Qaeda.

I strongly supported that mission.

But the Bush administration took its eye off Al Qaeda and invested very little money and effort in Afghanistan after 2002. Instead, it launched an invasion in Iraq over phantom weapons of mass destruction, a move I vigorously opposed. The result was the Taliban was able to strengthen and rebuild in Afghanistan while we were preoccupied in Iraq.

There are several reasons why a mission of U.S. led counterinsurgency and nation building in Afghanistan is fundamentally flawed:

- First, it has put us in the difficult position of imposing a western style democracy on a people who are historically tribal, who have their own uniquely Afghan tradition of tribal, representative democracy, and who have successfully resisted other attempts at foreign intervention over many centuries.
- Second, we have no legitimate partner in Afghanistan. The Karzai government is riddled with corruption.
- And third, Al Qaeda has fled – to Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, Kashmir and around the world.

The question should not be how we defeat the Taliban.

The question should be how do we destroy Al Qaeda and what role does our involvement in Afghanistan play in that overall strategic objective?

Today, the Administration is considering a menu of options.

Several involve increasing our presence in Afghanistan by 20,000 to 40,000 more troops in an attempt to bolster a counterinsurgency strategy.

Classic military insurgency theory – according to the military field manual General Petraeus helped to author – says success in such a counterinsurgency mission would take at least 425,000 troops. But even with the build up, we will only have 100,000 troops. And the Afghan army only has 75,000 to 90,000 troops and they are facing difficulty, even with our support, at preventing significant numbers of deserters.

Sooner rather than later, we must confront the reality that if the Afghan people are not willing to fight for their own country, there is little we can do.

No foreign power has ever succeeded in Afghanistan.

Ask Ghengis Khan and Alexander the Great. Ask King George V of Britain or Leonid Brezhnev and Mikhail Gorbachev of the former Soviet Union.

Afghanistan is where great powers go to die.

Unlike these other countries, we do not seek empire, but we should heed the lessons of history.

Recently, it's been reported that the President is looking for another option.

That he's looking for "off ramps" and an exit strategy.

That provides each of you and the people of Massachusetts an opportunity for your voices to be heard.

If you don't believe in an open-ended American involvement fighting a prolonged counterinsurgency in Afghanistan, I want to provide you with a choice in this election, and an opportunity to weigh in on the Administration's decision making process.

I hope we have the wisdom now to change course – to clarify our mission, fundamentally change our approach – and begin to bring our troops home.

# #

We can draw inspiration from John Kennedy's experience confronting the Cuban Missile Crisis. The Soviets had secretly stationed nuclear missiles in Cuba, 1962.

President Kennedy's military advisors gave him two options: Bombing or invading Cuba.

But Kennedy knew neither option was feasible because they both could likely lead to nuclear war, so he searched for a third option.

In thirteen days, John and Robert Kennedy saved the world from nuclear war with a naval blockade combined with intensive shuttle diplomacy that traded our obsolete missiles in Turkey with the Soviet's missiles in Cuba giving our adversaries a face saving way out and ending the nuclear standoff.

Expanding and escalating a counterinsurgency war in Afghanistan is not a good option.

Withdrawing over night and leaving Afghanistan vulnerable to becoming a haven for terrorists is not a good option.

We need a third way that responsibly executes a smart, comprehensive counterterrorism strategy, helps to train the Afghan people to secure themselves, and ultimately leads to an end of our large scale military involvement there.

Here is my ten point strategy for how to get it done.

**First, we should go back to our original mission of destroying Al Qaeda and ensuring that Afghanistan not become a haven for terrorists.**

**Thus, we do not need to send more troops to Afghanistan but can draw down troops and bring them home.**

**Second, we should set a timetable for transferring counter insurgency operations from American and International forces to the Afghan government.**

We need to send a clear message to the Karzai government that we will not be there indefinitely and fight their battles for them. Otherwise, Karzai has no incentive to reform or engage with his opposition.

And as we transfer counterinsurgency operations from our forces to the Afghan government, we need to focus more of our effort on training the Afghan army and police and providing security for the trainers and trainees. And we must insist on the quality and integrity of those we train, more than just the numbers. Currently, too many are dropping out, and there is too much corruption among the Afghan police.

We also need to send a clear message to the Afghan people, who have been suffering with more than thirty years of war, that we do not plan to be in their country indefinitely.

And ultimately, this is their fight.

**Third, we should encourage the opposition led by Abdullah Abdullah and others to make their voices heard and keep the pressure on the Karzai government from within.**

**Fourth, we must insist that Karzai take clear and demonstrable action to weed out corrupt officials in his government and replace them with people of integrity and competence.**

He must begin with his brother, who is involved with the Opium trade, and we must immediately remove him from the CIA payroll. I am not confident at all that Karzai will reform, but we must insist on it as a condition of our continuing engagement.

**Fifth, as we push Karzai to allow for an opposition to exist as does any good democracy, we must also push the Karzai government toward negotiating with some of the elements known too broadly as "The Taliban."**

We have to take the excellent advice of General Petraeus and be very sophisticated about deciphering who are the "reconcilables" and who are the "unreconcilables" in Afghanistan.

Those who want to reconcile and be part of the future of an Afghanistan with a representative government should be brought into the fold.

Those who don't must be defeated.

But we have to be very smart about discerning between the two.

A smaller, but very well-trained, well-informed number of counterterrorism troops can do that. And they can do that more effectively in smaller numbers than they can with a surge of troops that may further alienate the population.

**Sixth, rather than imposing a western style democracy on Afghanistan, we need to be more cognizant of Afghan traditions and encourage their own representative democratic tradition, the Afghan tribal, bottom-up system of the Loya Jirga grand council.**

**Seventh, we need to support economic development.** That means building more roads, bridges, schools, hospitals and micro-enterprise as an alternative to selling opium.

It is in our national interest to prevent Afghanistan from falling prey to a terrorist ideology that exploits chaos and economic hardship.

To do this, **we should fully fund and rapidly develop the new Civilian Response Corps**, an effort led by Secretary of State Clinton, coordinating eight cabinet departments and government agencies.

We need to enlist brave, idealistic American civilians who can bring their skills to this struggle. We need accountants and lawyers who can help to review contracts and work against rampant corruption thwarting

the success of the mission. We need people willing to step forward to ensure our aid to this country is going to the projects for which it is intended.

**Eighth, we need to focus on destroying Al Qaeda globally by expanding our use of intelligence, special forces and drone attacks.**

And we should explore creating a **New International Counter Terrorism Organization, a 21<sup>st</sup> century version of NATO for counter terrorism**, that will more rapidly share intelligence and coordinate measures among our strategic allies and partners to prevent future terrorist attacks on all of us.

This is a strategy that has begun to take shape recently with noticeable success. There have been surgical strikes on specific targets in Somalia, Yemen and Indonesia. We need to build on these successes and continue in that direction of a smart, stealth form of counter terrorism.

**Ninth, as we draw down our commitment in Afghanistan, we need to refocus our efforts in Pakistan and do everything we can to support the new democracy there.** We're spending \$43 billion a year in Afghanistan and only \$2 billion in Pakistan – and yet Al Qaeda is in Pakistan and Pakistan has nuclear weapons.

We should explore a new **“Marshall Plan” for both Pakistan and Afghanistan** that will send a message that we are committed for the long haul to provide aid that will promote stability and development in both of these countries.

But that aid should be tied to reform and progress on the ground.

**Tenth, we need to support our veterans and military families, who are carrying an extraordinary burden because of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.**

We must **ensure mandatory full funding for the Veterans administration** and provide every single veteran with the resources they need once they get home.

And each of us must thank them and honor them deeply for their service to our country.

All told, that is a new approach. Not simply a military strategy but a comprehensive foreign policy strategy.

Not counterinsurgency and nation building in Afghanistan but ensuring Afghanistan does not become a haven for terrorists and fighting terrorism globally.

Not a troop build up but ultimately a force draw down in Afghanistan and setting a time table for transferring counterinsurgency operations over to the Afghan government.

Not simply and simplistically asserting we must bring our troops home, but providing a plan to do so, given complex realities.

# # #

The choices in Afghanistan are not easy. But with the right strategy, we can redefine our mission and succeed in our fight against Al Qaeda.

Each of us running for Senate in Massachusetts has a responsibility to share our views and our plans on what must be done.

And we in Massachusetts have a unique opportunity to send a message to Washington.

We need a change in direction.

We need a more thoughtful and comprehensive approach to counterterrorism and the situation in Afghanistan.

And we need an end to mindless, expansive wars in the Middle East and Central Asia, and the unending costs to American families, lives and treasure.

I'd like to close by sharing the story of just one of the hundreds of thousands of brave men and women who have served our nation in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I share it not to say that all veterans will agree with me—some may, some may not.

Rather, I share it simply to remind all of us, myself included, of the solemn responsibility we have to our nation, to our veterans and most of all to our troops, to get this right.

Mike Pereira is a 27-year old combat veteran who served in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mike faced many challenges as a soldier.

Leaving home, training and multiple deployments.

But the hardest challenge was returning home.

Within three months of returning from the desert he lost his job, his fiancée, and a fellow veteran and close friend committed suicide.

At Mike's lowest point, he reached out to the Mission Continues – a wonderful organization that helps wounded and disabled Veterans adjust to coming home by getting them involved in civilian service to others.

Mike was once again able to lead, organize and reach out to others like himself in his community.

As Mike said last week at a Veterans Day celebration attended by First Lady Michelle Obama:

“Not all of us can continue our service in the military, but we have a strong desire to serve in our communities. And through your efforts and ours we can build a stronger nation.”

Mike is a true patriot and hero.

Mike Pereira reminds us all of the human cost of this war but also that with an undaunted spirit, we can find our way back home.

Thank you all very much.