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**REMARKS BY  
U.S. AMBASSADOR TO BANGLADESH DAN MOZENA  
AMERICA'S PARTNERSHIP WITH BANGLADESH  
CAPSTONE COURSE  
NATIONAL DEFENSE COLLEGE  
MIRPUR  
JANUARY 7, 2013**

Commandant Lieutenant General Mollah Fazle Akbar

Distinguished Faculty Members

... and, you, the most distinguished students ...

Asalaam a'laikum ... and good afternoon.

I am humbled and honored to have this opportunity to meet students such as you, and I look forward to exchanging views with you.

The date was November 19, 2011 ... my wife and I had just arrived in Dhaka ... our dream of some day returning to Bangladesh as America's ambassador was coming true ... we were so happy ... as I got off the airplane, I dragged behind me a big, heavy bag ... I thumped that bag down the steps and loaded it into my car ... to this day, I drag that bag with me everywhere I go in Bangladesh. When I arrived here at the National Defense College, the bag was so heavy that I left it outside. One person noticed me putting the bag in a corner by the door and asked me what is in such a big bag.

"Oh," I said, "that bag has my mandate from Washington, my heavy mandate to broaden, to deepen, to strengthen the relationship between America and Bangladesh to the mutual benefit of the people of both nations."

Indeed, I am in Dhaka with a mandate to take our relationship to the greatest heights ... as far as Bangladesh wants to go ... I will not come up short in holding up my end in building this partnership.

I have this mandate for good reason.

Bangladesh is a country of deep strategic interest to America. The seventh largest country in the world, Bangladesh is a tolerant, moderate, secular, democratic alternative to violent extremism in this troubled region of the world. Bangladesh matters to America in countering terrorism and violent extremism.

As Bangladesh deepens its ties with its neighbors – India, Nepal, China, Burma – it brings greater stability to this region. Bangladesh matters to America.

Bangladesh is the largest contributor of policemen, policewomen and soldiers to international peacekeeping operations with nearly 11,000 Bangladeshis on duty in nine different operations. Bangladesh matters to America in promoting global peace and security.

With the world's population set to reach nine billion by mid-century, feeding this growing population is a growing challenge. Bangladesh's ability to feed itself is critical to both global food security and its own development. Bangladesh matters to America.

America's other key interests include trade and investment, promoting core values such as democracy and respect for human rights, and helping Bangladeshis prepare for and cope with all-too-frequent natural disaster. Bangladesh truly matters to America.

To advance these interests, my Mission and I work hard to promote a Bangladesh that is peaceful, secure, prosperous, healthy and democratic. I fervently believe that such a Bangladesh is in the best interests of the people of America, of South Asia and, most particularly, of Bangladesh.

America's relationship with Bangladesh is strong, and our partnership is deep and productive. America is Bangladesh's largest market; America is the largest investor in Bangladesh; America is the third largest source of remittances to Bangladesh; America is Bangladesh's second largest bilateral development partner.

Only Bangladesh is a partner in all four of President Obama's signature global initiatives: Global Health, Feed the Future, Global Climate Change, and Engagement with the global Muslim community. Bangladesh is truly a great partner. Working together, America and Bangladesh have already achieved so much to improve the well-being of the people of Bangladesh.

- The partnership has helped reduce maternal mortality, placing Bangladesh on track to achieve this Millennium Development Goal.

- The partnership has helped reduce child under five mortality, again enabling Bangladesh to soon achieve its Millennium Development Goal.
- Thanks to the partnership, Bangladeshis are now better able to have the family size they want, thus helping the government of Bangladesh meet its goal of reducing the fertility rate to replacement levels.
- The partnership is helping Bangladesh achieve food security by enabling farmers to increase food production, by enabling Bangladeshis to develop the means to procure food for the family, and by teaching mothers how to select and prepare varied, nutritious food for the family.
- The partnership helps Bangladesh adapt to the effects of global climate change, which will have a heavy impact on Bangladesh.
- The partnership is heavily engaged in disaster preparedness. Already America in partnership with Bangladesh has built or rebuilt nearly 550 cyclone shelters and is now in the process of building 130 more, including 30 that will serve as Coastal Crisis Management Centers manned by the Bangladesh Coast Guard. These Centers will have cyclone-proof communications so Bangladeshi authorities can immediately assess the impact of a cyclone and begin rescue operations without delay. With Bangladesh increasingly well prepared to deal with cyclones, floods and tidal surges, the partnership has shifted focus to earthquake preparedness. I am working now to try to help Bangladesh establish a Regional Urban Disaster Management Center.
- The partnership continues to work to strengthen Bangladesh's emerging democratic institutions by increasing the capacity of governance at the upazilla and union parishad levels, by helping parliament bolster its committees so they can provide more effective oversight, by improving investigative journalism, among others.
- The partnership is playing a key role in helping the Bangladesh Police instill a new philosophy of policing, replacing the lathi approach with community-based policing. At any given time, there are three policemen from the Portland Police Department at the Bangladesh Police Academy in Sardah, sharing their experiences in regard to community-based policing.
- Our military-to-military partnership is especially strong and productive. Working together, America and Bangladesh have strengthened Bangladesh's ability to secure its

maritime borders from piracy, terrorism, trafficking of people, drugs, and arms ... Bangladesh can now better protect its fish and other resources in the Bay of Bengal. This partnership has helped Bangladesh create a Navy Seals-like capacity, called SWADS, that is most impressive. Thanks to SWADS, robberies of ships at anchorage in Chittagong have fallen by nearly 75% and insurance rates have dropped, too. Our engagement with the Bangladesh Navy and Coast Guard has included the transfer of dozens of high speed, high performance boats. By the end of this year, I hope to see the transfer of a used US Coast Guard cutter to the Bangladesh Navy; this ship will become the largest in Bangladesh's fleet. Our partnership with the Army includes engagement with the First Para Commandos to increase their capacity to respond to security crises in defense of the nation. I would like to expand our support to the Border Guards Bangladesh through training to increase their capacity to secure Bangladesh's long land borders. I hope, too, to deepen our partnership with the Bangladesh Air Force by effecting the transfer of four used C-130H's to enhance Bangladesh's capacity to respond to disasters and to support its participation in International Peacekeeping Operations. I am endeavoring to support Bangladesh's initiative to establish a new National Academy for Security Training.

- I could go on and on about this partnership, but I just don't have time to tell you about the huge system of Smiling Sun health clinics the partnership supports, the teaching of English and other basic skills in madrassas, the Sisimpur program for pre-schoolers, expanded scholarships so more Bangladeshis can get Master's and PhD degrees in America, and so much more, but I must move on.

As you can see, America's partnership with Bangladesh yields tremendous, tangible results for the benefit of the people of Bangladesh. Indeed, America's relationship with Bangladesh has never been better, and I am deeply proud of this partnership ... but I want to do even more; I want to take this relationship to greater heights, as I said earlier. I want to clear away in a constructive manner those issues that constrain the relationship, such as labor rights, treatment of Rohingya refugees, and the future of Grameen Bank, so we can explore adding even richer elements to the relationship such as summit level interactions and the Millennium Challenge Account.

As the new year gets underway, I would like to take a moment to reflect on the year that was. Last year was a great year for the partnership between America and Bangladesh. The highlight for me was fulfilling my dream of having Secretary Clinton visit so she could see for herself the fruits of our partnership with Bangladesh. While she was here, the Secretary fulfilled another of my dreams when she and Foreign Minister Dipu Moni signed an agreement to establish a partnership dialogue. The first session of this dialogue took place in Washington in September and gave strategic focus and direction to our relationship. Last year saw other important firsts, including the first ever security dialogue in April, where we exchanged perspectives on the security aspects of the partnership, and the first ever military-to-military dialogue on the specifics of military engagements that would work best in promoting our shared interests. Meanwhile, people-to-people linkages reached new heights as ever greater numbers of Bangladeshis studied or traveled in the U.S.

As I flip the viewing glass around, I see this new year as a critical one for Bangladesh. I believe that this year will be key to whether Bangladesh becomes the next Asian Tiger of my vision, the Royal Bengal Tiger. I hope the political parties engage early and constructively to find an agreed way forward to hold free, fair, credible elections. This would both strengthen Bangladesh's democratic institutions and help Bangladesh attract the investment dollars flooding out of China as the readymade garment and household textile industries leave China and look for new homes ... that new home should be Bangladesh. I have a vision of a Middle-Income Bangladesh, Sonar Bangla where all Bangladeshis have the means to provide their families safe housing, ample, nutritious food, quality education, and good healthcare. I envision a Bangladesh where stunting of children is eliminated; currently 41% of Bangladeshi children are stunted, effecting both their physical and mental development ... this must end. I envision a Bangladesh that is the world's largest exporter of RMG and household textiles, replacing China, a Bangladesh that is a major global player in exporting footwear, finished leather goods, frozen fish and shrimp, generic pharmaceuticals, small and medium freighters and tugboats, IT, bone china, jute, silk and the list goes on and on. I envision a Bangladesh where the agricultural revolution continues and the nation becomes truly food secure. I envision a Bangladesh that launches an education revolution that creates a highly educated and skilled work force so Bangladesh's migratory labor force is skilled and semi-skilled not just unskilled as is the current situation. I envision a Bangladesh that takes fullest advantage of its location at the nexus of the

New Silk Road and the Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor. Truly, I envision the Royal Bengal Tiger proudly and powerfully strutting across the global economic stage, a Bangladesh that is an economic power commensurate with its size.

Of course, the constraints are real, and each of us knows them well: inadequate ports, roads, railroads, and energy and power supplies, corruption, rule of law shortcomings, and the threat of political instability that I alluded to earlier. These challenges are serious, but each is resolvable.

I believe that you, the senior political, government, business, security, and civil society leaders of today and tomorrow are key to resolving these challenges so Bangladesh can become a middle income country over the next decade or two, so Bangladesh can become Sonar Bangla, so Bangladesh can become the next Asian Tiger.

I believe that this CAPSTONE course will give you the tools you need to help Bangladesh become the Bangladesh of our shared vision.

I wish you well as you undertake this endeavor.

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*\*As prepared for delivery*