Good morning.

I’d like to extend a warm welcome to our Afghan partners: Chief Justice Azimi, Minister Karimi, Minister Hashemzai, LTG Junbish, Dr. Kamawi, Mr. Yama, and other distinguished guests.

AMB Dinesen, it’s terrific to have you here as well. We’re grateful for Denmark’s leadership and partnership in this endeavor. Finally, AMB Gass, ISAF senior leadership, and the NROLFSM Team – it is a pleasure to be with you this morning. Thank you all for coming.

Today, we say farewell to the out-going Commander, BG Mark Martins, and we welcome aboard another outstanding Officer, RDML Jim Crawford.

NROLFSM’s mission is vital to the outcome of our campaign. To achieve the long-term and durable peace that we seek here in Afghanistan, the Afghan people must have confidence in their government; they must believe that their government can serve their interests and meet their basic needs.

One of those fundamental needs is the effective administration of justice and the credible resolution of disputes. That is the work of this important Command and the men and women who execute its mission: to provide essential field capabilities for our Afghan partners; to help establish functioning courts; to train and support judges, prosecutors, and haqooqs; and to help build and strengthen the institutions that will serve as the bedrock of a credible and effective Afghan formal and informal justice system for many years to come.

NROLFSM faces a challenging mission, and it needed the right person at the helm. The combination of Mark’s extraordinary military leadership and legal knowledge made him the perfect choice to assume Command. BG Martins is a Ranger, a Senior Parachutist, a Pathfinder, and an Expert Infantryman. The leadership skills he developed in the infantry run deep. As they say: once a small unit leader, always a small unit leader. He served as the Chief of Staff of USKFOR and Task Force Falcon in 1999 in Kosovo.

He has served three tours in Iraq. During the Division’s spring of 2003 march to Baghdad, Mark commanded a convoy of the 1st Armored Division Headquarters and served as Staff Judge Advocate. And he has twice served as the Acting Commander of CJIATF-435 here in Afghanistan. True to form, BG Martins has risen to the task at hand as Commander of NROLFSM. During his tour here, BG Martins commanded hundreds of troops from different services and military specialties across 8 Provinces and 23 Districts.

Under his outstanding leadership, NROLFSM has helped to stand up courts and helped to train and support judges and prosecutors in parts of Afghanistan that have historically lacked a government presence. With NROLFSM support, under Mark’s command, Afghans have held the first public trials in decades in places like Surkh Rod, Bati Kot, Kuz Kunar, and Shinwar. These public trials have helped to increase
transparency in the Afghan judicial system and have demonstrated to the Afghan people that the government is making strides in the administration of justice. These efforts, over time, will help further enhance the government’s credibility and legitimacy among the Afghan people.

In the past fourteen months, under Mark’s leadership, places like Garmshir, Nawa, Marja, Musa Qala, Arghandab, Zheray, Spin Boldak, Nadir Shah Kot, Orgun, and many others that previously did not have Prosecutors, Judges, or Haqooqs now have them – thanks, in part, to the efforts of NROLFSM.

It will take time for the judicial system to fully develop. And these legal and judicial professionals will further hone their proficiency with time and experience. But these brave Afghans are standing up, increasingly, to serve their fellow Afghans – working to advance the rule of law in this proud land and to pursue justice for the Afghan people. The Afghan people are better served for what has already been accomplished. And in NROLFSM, the Afghan government and the Afghan people will have a devoted and steadfast partner in this important work for years to come.

Mark, thank you for your dedication and your extraordinary work here. I thank you for what you have done for the people of Afghanistan, for your country, and for the mission. We know you have been fortunate to enjoy the support of your wife and two children during your deployments four out of these past five years. Please let them know that I thank them for their sacrifices.

We wish you much good luck in your next assignment – Chief Prosecutor of some of the most significant terrorism and national security cases our country has ever sought to bring to a court of law. We know that you will rise to the occasion, as you have done here.

As we say farewell to BG Martins, we welcome RDML James Crawford, who, today, will assume leadership of this important Command.

Jim has had an illustrious career in the Navy and throughout the Department of Defense. He has served all over the world in a variety of important assignments, including Staff Judge Advocate for the Commander of U.S. Pacific Command as well as Special Counsel to the Chief of Naval Operations. Most recently, he served as Legal Counsel to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

I know you will bring your impressive credentials and tremendous abilities to this Command, Jim, and I look forward to working closely with you. As you know by now, you inherit a remarkable team of dedicated professionals at NROLFSM. I want to thank the NROLFSM Team for your hard work and dedication. Thanks to your efforts, we are seeing results.

This Command will achieve great things for the Afghan people and for this important mission. The impact will be felt by Afghans for generations to come… I look forward with great anticipation – as I know all of you do as well – to the work ahead.