

Fw: yes

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RELEASE IN FULL

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Subject: Fw: yes

See below

From: McDonough, Denis R.
To: Mills, Cheryl D
Sent: Wed Mar 11 22:34:21 2009
Subject: FW: yes

From: McDonough, Denis R.
Sent: Wednesday, March 11, 2009 10:34 PM
To: 'Verma, Richard'
Subject: yes

Obama names general who was top US military commander in Afghanistan as new ambassador there

Associated Press
March 11, 2009

WASHINGTON - President Barack Obama on Wednesday named a career military officer who once was the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan to be the next ambassador to the war-torn country and tapped a veteran diplomat to be the new American envoy in Iraq.

The White House said Obama had nominated Lt. Gen. Karl W. Eikenberry, who served in Afghanistan twice, including an 18-month tour that ended in 2007, to be ambassador in Kabul, and Christopher Hill, a seasoned negotiator who led the U.S. team at nuclear disarmament talks during the Bush administration, to be ambassador in Baghdad.

He also named:

_ Ivo Daalder, a former Clinton administration National Security Council official, to be ambassador to NATO.

_ Alexander Vershbow, a former ambassador to Russia and South Korea, to be assistant secretary of defense for international security.

_ Richard Verma, a lawyer and former Senate aide, to head the State Department's legal team.

"These extraordinarily accomplished individuals have served their country with great distinction, and they have each agreed to take on tough assignments," Obama said in a statement. "I am confident that they will work with a sense of purpose and pragmatism ... as we renew American diplomacy, strengthen our military, and advance our values and interests around the world."

The picks for the two most prominent jobs announced on Wednesday, Eikenberry and Hill, had been known well in advance.

Obama, in fact, already had announced his choice of Hill to succeed Ryan Crocker as ambassador in Iraq.

The formal nominations set the stage for Senate confirmation hearings and eventual votes on their selections.

Sen. Sam Brownback said he was disappointed in Hill's appointment. In a statement released Wednesday, Brownback, R-Kan., said Obama should reconsider Hill because he lacked experience in the Middle East and had been "evasive and unprofessional" in past dealings with Congress.

With his Afghanistan experience, Eikenberry knows the issues facing the troubled country and its players, including the challenge of a resurgent Taliban and the need to build up an Afghan army to take on that fight. He has warned repeatedly that the U.S. cannot win in Afghanistan and defeat global terrorism without doing something about al-Qaida fighters holed up in neighboring Pakistan.

Those issues are at the heart of a sweeping strategy review the Obama administration is conducting to define and reshape the U.S. mission in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Obama recently announced a plan to send 17,000 additional U.S. troops there, and is weighing a request by ground commanders to send even more.

Obama is expected to announce the results of the Afghanistan review before traveling to Strasbourg, France, for a NATO summit in early April.

Hill is a career foreign service officer who before heading the U.S. negotiating team with North Korea had served as ambassador to Poland and Macedonia and as a negotiator in the crises in Bosnia and Kosovo.

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