

“United States Policy in Afghanistan”
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Mr. Chairman, distinguished members, I am pleased to have this opportunity to testify before the Committee about our policy and our progress in Afghanistan.

The Afghan people have been through a terrible ordeal, over the last quarter-century. Their country was one of the poorest and least developed in the world, even before the ordeal began. But then came Communist misrule, a Soviet invasion, a war of liberation against the Soviet occupation, and then the Taliban. An entire generation of war and tyranny left the country's institutions, economy, and social structure in shambles.

In the two years since Operation Enduring Freedom helped Afghans liberate their country, we see a nation rebuilding, we also see large-scale international support for that rebuilding:

- The Bonn Agreement filled the political vacuum by bringing Afghan political forces together in a process to build first an interim government, then a transitional government, and soon an elected, permanent constitutional government.
- Famine was averted in 2001; tons of hybrid feed were distributed. A new currency was introduced; International Monetary Fund arrears were cleared. International development assistance is flowing in. A national ring road is being built to promote not only economic growth and regional trade but national unity.
- Two million refugees have returned home.
- New security institutions are being built - - Ministries of Defense and Interior, a National Army, national police, and border and highway police.

This is, overall, a remarkable story. We acknowledge the continuing problems; no one can doubt how serious some of them are. But how could these problems be unexpected in a country that has been through such an ordeal? Recognizing these challenges, the United States is redoubling its effort to accelerate the pace of the progress being made. This effort is reflected in the President's Emergency Supplemental Appropriation request for more than \$900 million for Afghanistan and in renewed efforts to galvanize international support.

The Security Situation

Let me focus on the security situation.

The Afghan people face two sources of insecurity. The first are the operations of the enemy - - the Taliban, al Qaeda, and spoilers like Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. The second is the degree of instability occasioned by rivalries among local commanders (or "warlords") not yet fully responsive to the authority of the central government.

We take seriously both of these challenges. The Coalition is working with the government of President Karzai to address them. We think that neither challenge is a threat to the consolidation of the political process laid down in Bonn, or to the progress being made.

We have seen the Taliban step up their military activities in recent months. After operating in only small units, the Taliban have attempted to graduate to larger-unit attacks, sometimes with more than 100 fighters. The net result so far, however, has been that CJTF-180 - - and Afghan forces - - have disrupted enemy operations and inflicted serious casualties on the enemy.

Operations Warrior Sweep (since early August) and Mountain Viper (since early September) have driven the enemy out of sanctuary it sought in the south and southeast; it resulted in the capture of over 800 weapons, grenades, mortars, and rockets, and over 50,000 lbs. of ammunition. As many as 200 Taliban and other enemy fighters were killed.

We anticipate that the challenge from the enemy will continue. They may attempt a fall offensive of some kind. But the Coalition and the Afghan government are ready. The enemy will certainly test us, but we expect that this offensive will fail. At that point, the enemy - - not we - - will face hard strategic decisions.

We are greatly encouraged by Pakistan's recent military operation - - Operation al Miwan - - against the Taliban in the Federally-Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Pakistan's cooperation is crucial.

The second security concern, as I mentioned, is the instability that remains as the central government gradually extends its authority over the country. We are working with President Karzai and the international community in four principal areas to deal with this challenge.

The first is the development of effective, national, and professional security institutions, particularly the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the national police and border and highway police.

This Committee is familiar with our program to build and train the ANA. In September the Afghan government appointed the leadership of and activated the Central Corps in Kabul. Eleven ANA battalions have now graduated from the Kabul Military Training Center, and a twelfth is in training. Next year, we hope to accelerate the rate of training from 6,000 a year to 10,000. Of the eleven graduated battalions, we have 4,000 soldiers either deployed with Coalition forces or completing more advanced or specialized training.

ANA battalions have ably conducted presence patrols and combat operations. The reaction of the Afghan public to ANA presence patrols has been uniformly positive. As one local leader said, "Wherever the ANA goes, stability breaks out." The ANA has also performed well in combat.

The two greatest challenges are attrition -- a problem that is very real but that has recently diminished -- and a large gap between the high demand for the ANA for a variety of missions and the limited supply so far of ANA units.

In parallel with the building of a truly national army, we have also worked to help President Karzai and Defense Minister Fahim reform the Ministry of Defense, so that all Afghans will see it as a genuinely national institution. In September, President Karzai announced new appointments for the 22 top positions, introducing greater political and ethnic balance. This reform process, we expect, will continue.

The Ministry of Interior controls the National Police and the Border Police. The Department of Defense hopes to be able to support our State Department colleagues in assisting these efforts as well.

Second: At bottom, the warlord problem is a political problem. Since last spring, our government has worked with President Karzai in support of his political strategy to extend his national authority. We believe he has a well-thought-out strategy, and we have made clear the U.S. Government's backing of his reform efforts:

- Last May, with our support, the central government concluded an agreement requiring provincial governors who controlled customs posts to turn over revenues to the Ministry of Finance. Virtually nothing had been received before that agreement. Since then, more than \$90 million has been turned over, putting the central government ahead of its revenue projections for this year.
- In 2003, President Karzai and the Ministry of Interior have replaced about one-third of Afghanistan's provincial governors and about one-half of its provincial police chiefs -- all in a concerted effort to improve governance outside of Kabul and to extend the authority of the national government.
- In August, President Karzai simultaneously transferred the governor of Kandahar, Gul Agha Shirzai, to a ministry in Kabul; changed the governors of Zabol and Wardak provinces; and replaced Ismail Khan as corps commander in Herat.
- This move was a significant assertion of authority by President Karzai. At the time, the United States made an important public declaration that it endorsed President Karzai's reforms to assert the legitimate authority of the central government and to improve provincial governance.

- In addition, more recently, we have supported the efforts of President Karzai's commission, led by Minister of Interior Jalali, to find a solution to the frequent military clashes in Mazar-e-Sharif between Generals Dostam and Atta. Special Presidential Envoy Dr. Khalilzad engaged himself in support of this process on his recent visit, and our Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in the area also played a role in defusing tensions.

The third dimension of our accelerated effort is the further deployment of these Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs)

The PRTs, as we anticipated a year ago when their concept was devised, are a flexible instrument for achieving several purposes, including: to facilitate reconstruction efforts around the country; to contribute to the facilitation of security where needed; to bolster the presence and authority of the central government; and to provide another vehicle for internationalizing the overall effort.

PRTs typically comprise 60-100 military and civilian personnel representing several agencies in the U.S. Government. Their composition is meant to be flexible, adapting to the particular needs of a region; they include a civilian led reconstruction team, engineers, security and military observer teams, linguists, and interpreters, and a medical team. The PRTs work with Afghan government ministries, local officials, UN agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to facilitate their efforts.

Four PRTs, as you know, are already deployed, and four more should be deployed in the next few months. The U.K., New Zealand, and now Germany are taking over some of these teams.

Our fourth line of activity is support for international partners, including on security issues where they have the lead. We will work with the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) and with Japan on disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of militia forces. We support U.K.-led program against narcotics. We are supporting German efforts in police training and Italian efforts in judicial reform.

In addition, we welcome the fact that NATO has taken over command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kabul, and that Germany (as noted) has proposed to take over the PRT in Konduz.

The Germans, as you know, have proposed that their PRT in Konduz come under ISAF. We have agreed to this idea and are working out the details. We are open, as well, to expanding ISAF's mandate more broadly - - as the new UN Security Council Resolution 1510 earlier this week now permits. If ISAF's role does expand, some of the issues we will need to pay attention to are:

- That the new arrangements ensure deconfliction between ISAF and OEF and do not impede OEF operations;
- That all these activities support the political strategy of President Karzai that the U.S. is supporting; and
- That the new arrangements be backed by real commitments of forces from NATO partners.

Conclusion

Let me conclude, Mr. Chairman, with an example of how these diverse strands of policy can come together to help win the war against the Taliban.

In 2002, Paktia province in the east was considered one of the areas with the highest levels of enemy activity. Since then, the United States deployed a PRT near Gardez, the capital, and supported civil affairs and reconstruction activity. President Karzai replaced the governor, police chief, and sidelined local commanders who had been abusing the people. New national police were deployed, and we sent in the Afghan National Army on presence patrols. PRT activities - - sometimes in concert with ANA deployments - - have reinforced stability and won the confidence of the local population. Together, these reforms and deployments have transformed the security situation.

As we continue our efforts to improve security and to support reconstruction, the lesson of Paktia province should inform the work of all of the departments and agencies of the U.S. Government. PRT team members, through their patrolling and interactions with local Afghan elders and officials, have enhanced security. The PRTs are also extending the reach of the Afghan central government, which now has a representative at each PRT location. And quick-impact projects like the building of schools and clinics, or the drilling of wells, have helped PRTs to develop close relationships with Afghan communities. Our challenge is to expand the geographical impact of these activities, both by increasing the number of PRTs and extending their reach through satellite locations.

While the State Department and USAID are the lead agencies for Afghan reconstruction, DoD has also gladly supported them. DoD - - primarily through civil affairs teams (300 civil affairs personnel deployed) and PRTs - - is supporting the rebuilding of over 300 schools and 50 medical facilities, installing over 600 wells, and hiring over 30,000 Afghans countrywide.

I will conclude as I began, acknowledging the seriousness of the challenges that we and the Afghans face in rebuilding a country devastated by a quarter century of war. But we have a strategy, and we are accelerating our effort.

Our goals in Afghanistan clearly have bipartisan support. The President's Emergency Supplemental request is an opportunity for this nation to reaffirm and strengthen its commitment. That appropriation can make a significant difference.

Our nation's role in liberating the Afghan people is a success story. All Americans can be proud of what we and our Coalition partners helped accomplish. We did it for our own security, not simply out of altruism, and that is equally true today of our effort to ensure that Afghanistan becomes a successful, modern state and never again a safe haven for terrorists.

Our partnership with the Afghan people continues to grow and strengthen. The Administration and the Congress have much to do together to complete what we have begun.

Thank you.