



Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Opening Statement
Pakistan: Balancing Reform and Counterterrorism
July 14, 2004

AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

Mr. Chairman, I commend you for calling today's hearing. There are few places in the world more vitally important to the national security of the United States than Pakistan—and few places where our policy is in more desperate need of a serious, long-term strategy.

Do we have such a strategy in place? If we do, I'm hard-pressed to figure out what it is. Some of the Administration's policies towards Pakistan make sense, but it's difficult to see how the various pieces add up to any coherent long-range plan.

And we can't go on much longer without a plan. The stakes are far too high—for Pakistan, for the rest of South Asia, and for the United States itself.

Let's take a minute to review a few of the formidable challenges that our policy must address:

First (certainly from our perspective) is counter-terrorism. Pakistan has been an important partner in this effort—but far more remains to be done. Nearly three years after September 11, 2001, the architects of the worst terrorist assault in history are still believed to be hiding on Pakistani soil.

Osama bin Laden, his terrorist aides, and his Taliban confederates, are holed up in the tribal areas near the Afghan border. In recent months the Pakistani military has finally launched a campaign against Al Qaeda hideouts, but the operations have not yet rooted the terrorists from their sanctuary.

What is the Administration's plan for crushing Al Qaeda? Are we any closer to achieving this goal now than we were three years ago? Secretary Ridge tells us that Al Qaeda is planning a massive terrorist strike in the US—so why did the White House wait until just this year before pressing Pakistan to launch a campaign in the tribal areas?

Maybe there truly is a coherent plan for counter-terrorism cooperation with Pakistan, but I don't see it.

The second challenge is nuclear proliferation. Earlier this year, we learned that the head of Pakistan's nuclear program had sold both technology and know-how about the most dangerous weapons in the world to countries like Iran and Libya.

It's difficult to see how this trade could have gone on—for years, at facilities under military control—without the tacit consent or active participation of top officers in the Pakistani army.

Dr. Khan, one of the worst nuclear proliferators in the world, received a pardon for his activities from President Musharraf; he has not spent so much as a day in jail, and there is no likelihood that he ever will. To the best of my knowledge, he has not even been questioned by American officials, in order to shut down the nuclear black market he established.

Over the past few years, we've repeatedly been promised that Pakistan's nuclear secrets were not for sale. Even after 9/11—when everything was supposed to have changed, when we all were supposed to have awoken to the dangers of weapons of mass destruction potentially being sold on the open market—there were signs that the promise wasn't being kept.

When rumors surfaced two years ago of nuclear trade between Pakistan and North Korea, both Musharraf and the Bush Administration promised that if any leakage had occurred, it was absolutely 100% contained. Well, we now know that wasn't true. So what's the response today: a new promise that this time things will be different.

And maybe they will be. Maybe AQ Khan, and his cronies in the Pakistani military and intelligence agencies, truly have seen the light. But I wouldn't bet my life—or the lives of my grandchildren—on it.

What's the plan? What's our strategy to make sure that Pakistan's nuclear know-how isn't spread further afield?

The third challenge is Pakistan's relations with its neighbors. To the east is India—a relationship that has seen four wars so far (the most recent, in 1999, was sparked by reckless adventurism at Kargil, and ended only with the intervention of President Bill Clinton). In addition, Pakistan has supported a range of militant groups operating in Jammu & Kashmir, including some of the most brutal terrorist organizations currently in existence.

Thankfully, the leaders of Pakistan and India have tried to forge a peace between their countries. But all too often the current Administration's policy towards Indo-Pakistani peace appears to be little more than crisis management. And the failure to crack down on several hard-core terrorist groups based on Pakistani soil threatens the long-term prospects of any treaty.

Relations with Pakistan's neighbor to the west, Afghanistan, are hardly more encouraging. Elements of the Pakistani military and intelligence agencies still provide support to the resurgent Taliban, and to other militants seeking to destroy Afghanistan's fledgling democracy. US officials complain about it, but nothing seems to get done.

Does the Administration have a strategy for bringing a lasting peace to one of the most volatile regions in the world? Is there a plan to give Pakistan sufficient reassurance of its legitimate security needs that it doesn't have to embark on dangerous adventurism to the east and to the west? If so, I'd sure like to know what it is.

There are a range of other pressing challenges— the increasing power of extremist groups in Pakistani politics, the failure of Pakistan's secular education system, the urgent need for democratization. If I were to touch even briefly on each of these topics, I'd leave little time for our witnesses.

And, Mr. Chairman, we have an excellent panel of witnesses today.

Ambassador Schaffer has served her country both as a diplomat in South Asia, and the director of the Foreign Service Institute.

Prof. Nasr [pron. "NAA-sur"] is widely known as one of this country's foremost authorities on Pakistani politics, particularly the role of Islamic parties and the rise of radical groups.

Dr. Weinbaum is also a top scholar of the region, and was until recently the head of the Pakistan desk at the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research.

I look forward to hearing their testimony on this vitally important topic.