

**Senate Foreign Relations Committee**  
**Senator Richard Lugar**  
**Opening Statement for Hearing on Afghanistan**  
**March 8, 2007**

I welcome Assistant Secretary Boucher, as well as Jim Jones and James Dobbins, who have been good friends to this Committee. I appreciate the extraordinary expertise that our witnesses bring to our deliberations on Afghanistan.

Almost six months ago, the Foreign Relations Committee held a hearing on Afghanistan that featured General Jones. At that time, we observed that Taliban insurgents were challenging NATO forces in greater numbers, sowing dissent among Afghans, cooperating with the narcotics trade, and complicating security efforts in ways that inhibit the rule of law and reconstruction. Many analysts believe that fighting in Afghanistan soon will intensify as the Taliban attempt a spring offensive to demonstrate their strength.

Although the Taliban do not possess the capability to defeat the NATO, Coalition, and Afghan forces arrayed against them on the battlefield, the insecurity the Afghan people feel because of Taliban attacks, has caused some to lose confidence in the government. Others are leaning more heavily on tribal leaders and warlords who offer security. This undercuts the authority of the Afghan government and increases the risk of civil conflict between tribal factions.

The United States and our alliance partners must be prepared to respond to any increase in insurgent violence. There should be no doubt that Afghanistan is a crucial test for NATO. The September 11 attacks were planned in Afghanistan, al-Qaeda still operates there, and the fate of the country remains both strategic and symbolic.

As in Iraq, the success of our strategy depends not just on battlefield victories. It also depends on providing the populace with reason to support the central government and coalition forces. Battlefield successes will not bring security if economic dislocation and political resentment within Afghanistan provide the Taliban with a steady supply of recruits to replace their losses.

We need to underscore that the United States, NATO, and the international community are committed to stability and reconstruction in Afghanistan. We must focus efforts on economic development that makes a difference in the lives of Afghans and gives young people more employment options. We have established an infrastructure to support development in Afghanistan, including Provincial Reconstruction Teams. But if this infrastructure lacks resources to make discernible progress on electricity, water, health care, agriculture and other measures, it will be irrelevant to the security situation.

It isn't clear what portion of Taliban insurgents are true believers and what portion are so-called "day-fighters" -- local mercenaries who are being paid to fight by the Taliban, often with funds generated by the narcotics trade. But to the extent that alternatives to a mercenary livelihood can be expanded, the Taliban will find it more difficult to regenerate their ranks.

President Bush has made a significant request for new funds for Afghanistan in the 2007 Supplemental, including \$2 billion for economic reconstruction. It is vital that this funding be used to maximum effect and that our allies, similarly, meet their commitments.

The Afghanistan Compact, adopted by the international community last year, called for a significant increase in reconstruction and development efforts. Likewise, when NATO assumed command of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, it called for a renewed emphasis on reconstruction and development. Our partners in NATO and beyond must support these calls with an increase in resources.

I thank the Chairman for holding this hearing. I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses.

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