



INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE

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U.S. SENATOR KIT BOND

President's New Afghanistan-Pakistan Strategy: Good Start, But the Devil's in the Details

United States Institute of Peace

April 3, 2009

INTRODUCTION

Thank you Richard and thanks to the United States Institute of Peace for inviting me here today. It is a pleasure to kick off your "Congressional Newsmaker" series. The Institute is a tremendous resource for Congress as we try to develop a deeper understanding of the many regions and conflicts throughout the world.

Also, I owe a special thanks to the Institute for assisting my coauthor – Lew Simons – on our upcoming book: [The Next Front – Southeast Asia and the Road to Global Peace with Islam.](#)

Those of you here today are the experts; Members of Congress of course, are generalists. A Nobel-prize winning physicist (Niels Bohr) once said "An expert is a man who has made all the mistakes which can be made, in a narrow field." I do not want to extend that analogy to Congress, because it would mean we are making *all* the mistakes which can be made in *every* field.

We certainly want to avoid making mistakes. That is why it is so important for policymakers, academics, non-profits and the business community to talk to each other about important issues. Thank you for providing the forum for us to do so.

Today I have been asked to offer some thoughts on addressing the on-going conflict in Afghanistan and Pakistan – a region the Institute has focused on for some time.

THE PROBLEM

As we all know, things have not been going as well as we might have liked. Just within the last few weeks, the world has witnessed more attacks by violent extremists in Pakistan: the horrific assault on the Sri Lankan cricket team; the attack on the police training academy, both in Lahore in the East; and the suicide bombing that killed dozens of worshippers at a mosque on the Afghan border in the West.

These attacks underscore that the threats emanating from this region of the world are one of the greatest national security challenges of our time. This area of the world is complicated, and the inter-connections among the nations of South Asia and Central Asia are anything but

transparent and easy to understand. This region is also a hotbed for violent extremists that continue to threaten the United States and our allies.

I am cautiously optimistic about the President's newly unveiled initial approach to this challenge.

CT-HEAVY OR COIN-LITE?

The reason my optimism is guarded, is because the President has "split the baby" between two competing camps in Washington today; the first camp, focused strictly on counterterrorism – or CT, and the second which takes a counter- insurgency approach – or COIN.

For three years in Iraq we saw the failure of the counterterrorism approach. It wasn't until General Petraeus changed course and utilized a counter-insurgency approach that we began seeing progress in Iraq. This turnaround in Iraq is one of the reasons why I believe that the only way to address the long-term threat of terrorism in the region is by taking a Smart-Power, counter-insurgency approach.

Right now, the troop increases the President announced satisfy neither the requirements for the CT, which could do with less, nor the COIN approach, which would require more. The President will ultimately have to make a choice between these two strategies, and that choice will lead us to success or failure in the region.

The President does recognize, however, the need to have clearly defined objectives for our engagement, the need to take a regional approach to the conflict, and the need for a comprehensive strategy that ensures that all elements of the U.S. Government and international community are working together.

PERSONAL INVOLVMENT

These three elements were part of a plan I developed with my intelligence committee staff based on our years of focus on these issues. On November 5th I sent the President's national security team this plan and I am pleased to see he agreed that these three components should be part of his approach.

FEW DETAILS

Yet, the roll out of the President's strategy gives me some pause, because specific details on how the President plans to accomplish his goals and objectives remain unclear. Conceptual integrity in Washington does not equal operational integrity on the ground. The devil is always in the details and I want to know, where the devil are the details?

REGIONAL APPROACH

The right solution includes many critical details. First, we have to take a regional approach to this challenge. For example, we will not have success eliminating extremist elements in Afghanistan if we cannot confront them in western Pakistan. To do this, we must fully engage Pakistan. However, Pakistan is unlikely to engage fully until tensions abate with India, from both within Afghanistan and along Pakistan's eastern border. Complicating matters are nations like China that are uneasy with changing these regional dynamics. Furthermore, in the future we may have to rely on other states in the region for re-supply routes and basing options.

The President must address all of these interconnected elements as his team tries to persuade Pakistan to focus its forces on the western border and abandon whatever remaining support its intelligence services might have for militant groups in the region.

I understand that Ambassador Holbrooke and Secretary Clinton will be engaging with New Delhi and Islamabad shortly. I am interested to see what new approach they will take toward this relationship and toward their neighbors in supporting regional stability and supply operations.

ALLIES' COOPERATION

Second, we must have greater assistance and cooperation from our NATO allies. NATO must supply more military and civilian-assistance personnel and remove cumbersome constraints on their people in the field.

Let me be clear, NATO has failed in its responsibility to provide security in Afghanistan. The end result is that more American troops die in combat because some nations will not allow their troops to tackle the difficult or dangerous missions. It is essential that the President use this week's overseas trip to secure more than lip service from our European and NATO allies. It is time for our allies to step-up to the plate with troops, civilian experts, resources, equipment, and continued support.

One last comment on this point – this week marks the 60th anniversary of the founding of NATO. I'd like to wish NATO a happy birthday and hope for more *presence* in Afghanistan.

U.S. COORDINATION

Third, the U.S. must improve its own efforts. One of the great problems we have today is the failure to coordinate the resources we already have in-theater.

My friend and colleague Senator John Kerry and I saw this first hand last December. While American, Afghan, Pakistani and allied men and women were working hard to improve the situation throughout the region, we were disheartened to learn that no one could explain to us the overall strategy of the United States for the region or how their efforts fit into a greater whole.

It was encouraging on Wednesday to hear General Petraeus say that “we will foster comprehensive approaches by ensuring our military efforts reinforce U.S. policy goals and are fully integrated with broader diplomatic and development efforts.” While I'm glad to hear that our military efforts are going to be more coordinated, it is also critical that President Obama and his Special Envoy determine how each Department and Agency's efforts in the region will work together to meet the goals of our comprehensive strategy.

DEFEATING SAFEHAVENS

The President stated that part of this plan was defeating safe-havens in Pakistan. Well, you don't defeat a safe-haven, you change the environment to make it inhospitable for militants. And that does not mean security first and then development; what I'm talking about is “Smart Power” – our non-military, diplomatic and development efforts paired with security assistance. Without it, local citizens will have little reason to maintain the security gains, and little reason to deny safe-haven to militants.

As long as al Qaeda and Taliban militants can find sanctuary in the remote border regions of western Pakistan, they will not be defeated, dismantled, or disrupted to any great degree. As I suggested in my November paper, we must work with Pakistan to find out what will be required to achieve genuine and measurable progress against terrorists and insurgents in the Federally-Administered Tribal Areas and other border regions in Pakistan.

THREE LEGS OF THE STOOL

That leads me to my concern of how the President plans to approach the proverbial three legs of the stool that need to be addressed in the region, namely, security, development, and governance. The President should not be tempted to prioritize these into sequential efforts when in fact they must be addressed simultaneously. In other words, security, development, and governance must go hand-in-hand.

When the Administration says that we must “bring security first,” what does that mean? In most areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan, security does not equal U.S. forces trampling through the countryside engaging in pitched battles with militants. In fact, we have already tried winning the war through military might, and we now know military might alone can’t succeed. Security will only be truly established when local Afghan or Pakistani security forces are able to hold territory themselves and when they have the incentives to do so.

And for anyone who understands the conditions in this region, the need for both kinetic and non-kinetic efforts are obvious. In the poverty-stricken and war-weary tribal areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan, the challenges of mere survival plague local leaders. In addition to security, these people need the basic necessities of life: food, shelter, and water.

So to secure the support of the local leaders and their people, there must be a tight synchronization among elements within the U.S. government. The Commanders’ Emergency Response Program funds are an excellent tool to jump-start aid. But we need to have USAID and other development organizations coordinate better with our military forces to provide what local leaders want, and not just deliver to them one year later what we tell them they need. This means working with the local councils – or tribal Jirgas – to ensure we are meeting their needs.

One of the numerous, disappointing examples in Afghanistan of wasted effort was the U.S. Army building a road into the side of a mountain in northeastern Afghanistan and the local citizens allowing militants to come and shoot at our soldiers and destroy the road. The end result was 25-million U.S. tax dollars wasted, a frustrated local population and the needless exposure of our soldiers to great risk.

When asked why the Afghans allowed the militants to operate there, the local leaders responded that they never wanted a road. They wanted a well for clean drinking water, and said they would have kept the militants out to defend it. But because they did not want a road, they were indignant with our forces and they let the militants in.

Sometimes there are simple solutions to these problems. In this example, a little communication with local leaders would have gone a long way. Other times problems result from bureaucratic stovepipes and budgets administered by U.S. agencies which have no incentive from a headquarters’ perspective to coordinate with one another. That is why we need to give Ambassador Holbrooke as the Special Representative to the region the power to bring our

efforts together when our departments and agencies are not effectively coordinating with one another.

MISSOURI NATIONAL GUARD EXAMPLE

One successful example of concurrent security and development programs comes from my home state. As one of the early advocates for this program, I am proud to say that the work of the Missouri National Guard in Nangarhar Province was wildly successful in Afghanistan just last year.

In Afghanistan, seventy-five percent of the population is linked to the agriculture sector – much like my state of Missouri. Unfortunately, decades of war and neglect have decimated the nation’s agriculture sector and agricultural expertise is almost nonexistent. So the Missouri Guard chose one area of the country on which to focus, in this case Nangarhar. They brought in agriculture experts to teach Afghans the skills needed to grow and harvest alternative crops, like wheat. Also, the team has helped the Afghans build a slaughter facility and are now working on solar powered irrigation wells, a canning and juicing facility, and watershed management projects, just to name a few.

The guardsmen developed relationships and trust at provincial and district levels. Because they are soldiers, they provided their own security. They also harnessed the knowledge base of agricultural universities back home to develop strategies for their operating area.

As a result, Afghan farmers improved their lives and their land through sustainable agriculture that supplanted the narcotics trade. Now, I am not saying that the Guard’s efforts alone made the difference, but over the past year Nangarhar Province went from being one of the largest poppy-producing provinces in Afghanistan to virtually no production today.

Because of the Missouri Guard’s success, subsequent teams from Texas, Kansas, Nebraska, Kentucky, Indiana, Tennessee, Oklahoma, California, South Carolina, Florida and Iowa have picked designated areas in Afghanistan and are all either scheduled to deploy or have already deployed. Following the Missouri Guard’s lead, each of these teams will bring their unique skill-sets, backgrounds and the resources of their respective Land Grant Colleges back home to the effort. I hope that President Obama is looking at the Guard model for new programs in Afghanistan.

CONGRESSIONAL HELP

Congress also has a role in the development leg of the stool. Economic development can be spurred through legislative initiatives like the Afghanistan/Pakistan Reconstruction Opportunity Zone.

I am proudly cosponsoring this legislation with Senator Cantwell to provide duty-free treatment to certain textiles and apparel produced in Afghanistan and the border region of Pakistan. ROZs will promote job opportunities that may lure desperate young men away from extremism and will provide economic alternatives to raising poppy or trafficking in weapons and narcotics.

But along with opportunities for individuals on the ground, the ROZ establishes incentives for the Afghan and Pakistani governments. The creation of ROZs will reap

tremendous economic benefits for this region by creating jobs, alternatives to extremism, and incentivizing development. This is the type of government action we need to see more.

AFGHAN FACE

And now, I want to address one of the most important aspects of our strategy: putting an “Afghan face” on our efforts. The Afghan National Army is our best chance in the short-term for assisting the Afghans in developing a long-term national identity. As little boys in Afghanistan start aspiring to be Afghan soldiers, and as the ANA starts achieving a country-wide presence and gaining a professional reputation, we will have a viable nation-wide enterprise with which all Afghans can come to identify and respect.

American special operations forces have launched an excellent program to do this with the “Afghan Kommando” program, where they are training a specific unit and then distributing posters and even G.I. Joe-like dolls to the children to help them establish confidence and respect for their national army. This helps create a national identity for the next generation.

CORRUPTION

At the same time we must oversee how our resources are being spent. For example, in one town a police chief gladly received compensation from us for 150 individuals on his payroll. But only 30 of these individuals actually existed. Further, he boasted of withdrawing the money from their accounts to pay them himself, to “ease for them the burden of handling their own finances.” Obviously this gentleman missed his calling. He should be an AIG exec. Ok – you are still awake! I’m almost done.

MESSAGING

Just as important is our ability to win the public relations battle – which right now we are losing. While the U.S. flails about with an uncoordinated message the enemy has sophisticated theirs.

One tragic example happened in July of 2007, when a CH-47 Helicopter carrying critical supplies for the Kajaki damn power project was shot down in Afghanistan. Within minutes, the Taliban PR machine was reporting that they had successfully downed an ISAF attack helicopter. Two weeks later, NATO finally admitted that a helicopter had been lost, but would not comment on the details.

This missed PR opportunity is exactly the type of situation that sparked the creation of the Afghan Government Media Information Center, or GMIC. Created under the leadership of Ambassador Wood, the GMIC puts an Afghan face on the news and coordinates media activities and crisis management among the many different countries and agencies working in the region.

The GMIC is a start, but right now, we do not have a comprehensive strategy for communicating a tailored message to the local population. In Afghanistan today, there are many good news stories to tell, but too few resources. During my December trip to Afghanistan I learned that 95 percent of the Public Diplomacy efforts the US Embassy is executing there are funded privately! This is ridiculous!

TALKS WITH MILITANTS

One final point concerns talk I keep hearing about plans to reconcile with some Taliban fighters. There is nothing wrong with allowing the “day-fighters,” – those who are not hard-core

al Qa'ida supporters or Taliban ideologues – to lay down their weapons and return to peaceful lives.

The President's plan calls for provincial reconciliation centers, what does this mean? If it is a place where low-level Taliban can go to declare that they do not want to fight any longer, and pick up some wheat seed and farming tools, then I am all for it. Soft layers of the insurgency should be peeled off as a natural consequence of our population security-based campaigns. But if it is a program where we pay fighters to stop fighting, then I cannot object forcefully enough.

Money given to Taliban who say they are reconciling would just be funneled back to the Taliban itself. Again, we really need to hear some details on how these reconciliation centers will work. Paying insurgents to lay down arms is a futile and dangerous attempt to shut down the insurgency on the cheap.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I believe that we can defeat al Qa'ida and other violent extremists; we can establish a stable Afghanistan; and there is still time to turn Pakistan back from the brink of radicalization and internal destruction.

Our success in Iraq is a shining example of what we can accomplish with the right strategy and the right leadership and coordination. The President is headed in the general direction of a path towards improvement in the region. But he must provide details, numbers and answers before convincing me that we are on the path towards victory, stabilization, and security.

I look forward to continuing our dialogue on these issues with those of you here today. Thank you.

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