Kerry Opening Statement At Hearing Titled "Assessing U.S. Policy And Its Limits In Pakistan"

Washington, D.C. – This morning, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry (D-MA) chaired a hearing to examine the United States' engagement with Pakistan, how the killing of Osama bin Laden will impact this relationship, and the implications of our policy with Pakistan on our upcoming troop withdrawal and transition in Afghanistan.

The full text of Chairman Kerry's statement as prepared is below:

Good morning and thank you all for coming. This is the second in our series of hearings on Afghanistan and Pakistan and I'm pleased to welcome another distinguished panel of experts. Today we are focused across the Durand line on Pakistan.

This is a remarkable moment in terms of the challenges for American foreign policy. From the rising economic power of China to the upheaval across the Arab world, in North Korea, Iran, and with the Middle East Peace Process, we face complicated and difficult policy decisions that will affect our economy and our security. But as we survey this complicated landscape, there are few countries as important to our national security as Pakistan. The momentous events this week brought that into sharp focus.

Osama bin Laden's hideout in Abbottabad, a garrison city not far from Islamabad, perhaps 35 miles as the crow flies, raises serious questions for all of us. What did Pakistani's military and intelligence services know and when did they know it? Who did they think was living behind those 15-foot walls? Was there a level of curiosity? How could Bin Laden have gone undetected living next-door to Pakistan's equivalent of West Point, where just last week General Kayani gave a speech celebrating the Pakistani military "breaking the back" of terrorism?

It is simply honest to say that we are all troubled by these questions, and Pakistan has promised an investigation and answers. Like every other American, I want to know whether the Pakistani military or its intelligence services, or some component of either, was somehow unaware of its infamous neighbor or knowingly protected him.

No matter what we learn about the events that preceded the killing of Bin Laden, we have vital national security interests in this region, and we have worked to build a partnership with Pakistan that allows us to pursue common threats and interests. Despite Bin Laden's death, the fight against al Qaeda and other extremist groups that threaten the United States and our allies is far from over.

Going forward, we have to act thoughtfully and, no matter what, we have to remember the big picture, the larger strategic interest, and the full nature of this relationship with Pakistan. We should not rush into a situation that hurts our interests. A legitimate analysis concludes that it is undeniable that our relationship with Pakistan has helped us pursue our security goals. More senior Al Qaeda terrorists have been caught or killed in Pakistan than in any other country, in most cases as a result of joint operations with Pakistani authorities. Further, keeping 100,000 troops in Afghanistan – or even half that number – depends on an enormous supply train that

requires the daily cooperation of the Pakistani state. We rely on each other for intelligence, and often we work together to act on it. And we have some space in Pakistan to conduct drone strikes which have killed terrorists plotting against the United States. Make no mistake, these strikes have relied on the political capital of the Pakistani government and they have come at a cost to those leaders with their own population.

Even before Bin Laden's death, our relationship with Pakistan was fragile. The Raymond Davis affair stirred widespread anti-American sentiment across Pakistan. I have taken many trips to Pakistan and during my last trip, I have never seen anti-American sentiment so high. A dramatic increase in Pakistan's nuclear arsenal raised our concerns about nuclear proliferation and regional security. And no matter what, Pakistan is and will remain a nuclear state in a tinderbox of a region.

This is a dangerous and difficult neighborhood. Two basic facts are central to understanding the situation and the solution.

First, the real conflict is not between the United States and Pakistan, but within Pakistan itself. The battle is over what sort of nation Pakistan will become. Will the forces of violent extremism grow more dominant, eventually overpowering the moderate majority? If that happens, clearly our relations will certainly get worse and our interests will be even more threatened.

Or will Pakistanis recommit to the values espoused by the founder of their country, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and come together to build a stable, moderate democracy, an economically vibrant and socially tolerant nation at peace with itself and its neighbors? If so, friendship between our nations and the working partnership will inevitably grow stronger.

Second, while this outcome will be decided by Pakistanis themselves, the United States and other allies can't afford to sit on the sidelines. We can help promote stability and prosperity.
But we have to appreciate how deep anti-American sentiments run and the limited space we have to make a difference.

So what does mean for U.S. policy toward Pakistan?

First, we need to continue to make certain we have a strategy that reaches the people of Pakistan. For years, we had a Musharaff policy, not a Pakistan policy. We knew that needed to change. But even now we have to acknowledge that the lion's share of our energy and attention remains focused on the government and military side of Pakistan. We began to change that through the "Kerry-Lugar-Berman Act," which revived a tradition of U.S. assistance to Pakistan that goes back to the 1950s when we helped lay the foundation for Pakistan's future agricultural and industrial growth. We still face the challenge of demonstrating to the Pakistani people the positive difference the United States can actually make in their lives.

Second, we have to understand the impact of the war in Afghanistan on Pakistan. Too many in Pakistan are convinced that they will be encircled by India when coalition forces leave Afghanistan. As we discussed on Tuesday, Pakistanis – like too many Afghans – do not

understand what the U.S. end-game in Afghanistan actually looks like and are hedging their bets to safeguard their interests.

There is a lot to discuss here today and I'm looking forward to hearing from our expert witnesses. First, let me welcome Dr. Samina Ahmed, who is the South Asia Project Director of the International Crisis Group based in Islamabad. Moeed Yusuf is the South Asia Advisor at the U.S. Institute of Peace who focuses his research on his native Pakistan. And Michael Krepon is the Co-Founder of the Henry L. Stimson Center and an expert on nuclear proliferation issues, particularly in South Asia.

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