

Dick Lugar

U.S. Senator for Indiana

Date: 5/5/2011 • <http://lugar.senate.gov>
Mark Helmke • 202-224-5918 • mark_helmke@lugar.senate.gov
www.facebook.com/senatorlugar • www.twitter.com/senatorlugar

Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Hearing on Pakistan
Opening Statement by Sen. Richard G. Lugar
May 5, 2011

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for calling this important hearing on Pakistan. I join you in welcoming our distinguished witnesses.

The circumstances surrounding this week's dramatic killing of Osama bin Laden -- who was found by our forces near Islamabad in a well-populated area close to Pakistan's military academy -- have raised questions about Pakistan's reliability as an ally. Pakistani officials have been accused of being complicit or incompetent, but in either case, some critics say it is time for us to wash our hands of the whole country.

Even before the discovery of bin Laden's compound, our relationship with Pakistan had suffered strains. Pakistan's political institutions are weak and democracy has not developed deep roots. It is facing an internal extremist insurgency that, in the view of some U.S. experts, poses a serious threat to the state. President Zardari himself acknowledged earlier this week, "The forces of modernity and moderation remain under serious threat."

Lately, terrorists trained in Pakistan have attempted to carry out attacks in the United States. A grand jury in Chicago last week indicted two alleged members of Pakistan's intelligence service for involvement in the 2008 attacks on Mumbai, India. High-ranking Pakistani officials were reported last week to have urged Afghan leaders to distance themselves from the U.S. and build stronger relations with Pakistan and China, instead. U.S. drone strikes on Pakistani territory anger many in Pakistan, while the Americans have repeatedly accused elements in Pakistan's government of supporting Afghan insurgent groups -- charges that have gained resonance with the bin Laden operation.

Pakistan is not an easy partner. As Dr. Richard Haass testified Tuesday, "It is hard to imagine a more complicated bilateral relationship." But distancing ourselves from Pakistan would be unwise and extremely dangerous. It would weaken our intelligence gathering, limit our ability to prevent conflict between India and Pakistan, further complicate military operations in Afghanistan, end cooperation on finding terrorists, and eliminate engagement with Islamabad on the security of its nuclear weapons.

Pakistan is a nuclear-armed state with missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons. With more than 180 million people, it is one of the largest Muslim countries in the world and has five times the population of Afghanistan. It has a close working relationship with China, which is seeking to extend its influence throughout Asia. It frequently has been in conflict with India, with whom the United States has close relations. Pakistan is a neighbor of Iran, a terrorist-supporting state with nuclear ambitions. What happens along the Afghan-Pakistan border deeply affects the fate of our operations in Afghanistan. In short, Pakistan is a strategically vital country with which we must engage for our own national security.

Acknowledging this fact, Congress supported, on a bipartisan basis, the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act, signed into law in 2009. This legislation sponsored by Chairman Kerry and myself attempts to expand U.S.-Pakistani ties beyond military matters and signals our country's willingness to engage with Pakistan over the long term.

The United States has made some progress. President Zardari and other Pakistani leaders have lauded the bin Laden operation, and John Brennan, President Obama's counterterrorism advisor, said this week, "Pakistan has been responsible for capturing and killing more terrorists inside of Pakistan than any country." Our diplomatic, security and development ties are growing, despite many difficulties.

We should not distance ourselves from a country that looms so large in our own strategic calculations. We should be clear-eyed about the limits of our relationship. All military and development assistance should be subject to careful review to make sure that it is serving our national security interests.

I hope our witnesses will offer specific suggestions on ways to improve the U.S.-Pakistani relationship, and I look forward to our discussion.

###