

U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
Senator Richard G. Lugar
Opening Statement for New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan Hearing
May 21, 2009

Opening Statement for Hearing on Pakistan

U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Republican leader Dick Lugar made the following statement at today's hearing:

I join the Chairman in welcoming Admiral Mullen. We are extremely appreciative of his effort to engage our Committee on Afghanistan and Pakistan. This hearing gives members an opportunity to review the situation in the region from a military perspective and to more fully comprehend the scope of the integrated United States effort to combat extremism. Yesterday's JCS briefing for Members provided a chance to discuss some critical matters in a classified setting, including reports that Pakistan has continued to prioritize nuclear weapons production despite other budgetary challenges.

We also are grateful that Admiral Mullen will discuss the Kerry-Lugar Pakistan legislation - S. 962 - and how we might improve U.S. policy toward that country. He has been to the region frequently during his time as Chairman of the JCS, and his perspectives are valuable to our understanding of what is occurring there.

Chairman Kerry and I have listened carefully to those conducting a strategic review of U.S. policy in South Asia, and we have tried to ensure consistency between our bill and the President's goals. The Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act of 2009 sustains the objectives outlined by the Administration and provides tools to help implement them, including additional resources for oversight and accountability. Our legislation is intended to take advantage of the opportunity for revitalizing our relationship with Pakistan through greater diplomatic engagement, as well as a commitment to economic and political development. The President and his senior leadership have voiced support for this legislation. At last week's hearing, Ambassador Holbrooke asserted that the assistance envisioned in the bill is seen in the region as a central element of enhancing our long-term relationship.

The President has stated clearly that diplomatic, military, and development efforts related to Afghanistan and Pakistan are among our highest national security priorities. The Administration has backed this up with a request for billions of dollars of assistance to these countries and with Admiral Mullen's announcement that the Administration has designated Afghanistan as the "main effort" of our strategic military focus. Such strategic emphasis and the resources allocated to these purposes require considerable planning by the Administration to ensure a favorable outcome. Thus far, the Administration has provided overarching guidance for policy toward the region, and plans for Afghanistan that are somewhat more detailed, but it has yet to produce a comprehensive strategic blueprint of how our assistance will be utilized to achieve specific goals in these countries. Also lacking is a clear representation of the commitments that the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan will undertake, as well as the contributions of other donor countries.

I have been encouraged by Admiral Mullen's support for appropriate foreign assistance increases in the region. He has long recognized the importance of an integrated civil-military approach to many challenges, a view that has been reinforced by the President's strategic review. Our Committee is committed to strengthening the civilian capacity of the State Department, USAID, and other agencies in this strategic region and we welcome the Admiral's views of that process. We are interested in how the Department of Defense has engaged with the White House and other agencies in providing assistance in the region. The dynamic and dangerous environment in Pakistan will require a clear understanding of the responsibilities of our varied government agencies as they engage with the host government. Are agencies adequately coordinating, and if not, how can we improve? Has the Defense Department assumed roles out of necessity that are better performed by civilian agencies?

The Committee is also interested in Admiral Mullen's perspective on the tools necessary to fulfill the Administration's regional policy expectations. After years of U.S. support for the Pakistani military, it is extremely important for Members of Congress to understand how the United States will maintain effective oversight of funds to prevent misappropriation or diversion.

The Committee is grateful for your insights on the proposed legislation, on interagency coordination and cooperation, and on your recent visits to the region.

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