

Statement of Senator Thomas R. Carper, Chairman

**Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information,
Federal Services, and International Security**

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

“Addressing the U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Relationship”

June 12, 2008

The subcommittee will come to order.

I would like to thank my colleagues, our distinguished witnesses and guests for joining Senator Coburn and myself today. I also want to welcome Senator Feingold, a Member of the Senate Intelligence, Foreign Relations, and Judiciary Committees. Thank you for your willingness to share your views on what the United States should be doing in relation to Pakistan.

Before I begin, I also want to give a special thanks to the over 500 men and women serving in the U.S. Embassy in Pakistan. Based on recent visit to Islamabad, my staff tells me that our Ambassador there, Anne Patterson, runs a tight, organized ship. I commend her leadership and all our personnel there for their capable service.

Political instability, a growing Islamic insurgency, a demoralized army, and an intensely anti-American population are the hallmarks of today's Pakistan. In fact, most national security experts agree that Pakistan is the most dangerous country in the world today. Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, recently called the border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan “the site of planning for the next attack” on the United States. The region is also widely thought to be the hiding place of Osama bin Laden.

It has become clear in recent months that the billions of U.S. dollars poured into Pakistan have not helped secure its border with Afghanistan in large part because we failed to link assistance to specific policy goals. We also know our policies toward Pakistan since 9/11 have failed to stop or even mitigate anti-Western militants or religiously-based extremist elements in Pakistan. In fact, a study released by the RAND Corporation this past Monday says that Pakistani intelligence agents have aided both Afghan and Pakistani Taliban insurgents and compromised U.S. military movements. RAND warns that America will face “crippling, long-term consequences” if insurgent strongholds in Pakistan are not removed. In light of the virulent anti-American Islamic insurgency raging on the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan – from Balochistan, to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and up to the North West Frontier Province – we must decide how we effectively move forward with this partnership.

It goes without saying that the safety and security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is of the utmost importance. Preventing Pakistan's nuclear weapons and technology from falling into the wrong hands should remain top priority. The possibility of Al Qaeda or another terrorist group acquiring a warhead or enough radioactive material to create a dirty bomb is something that we simply cannot leave to chance.

While there is a very small chance that Pakistan's nuclear assets could be seized by terrorists or other militant groups, the U.S. should pursue policies that promote the safety of Islamabad's nuclear capabilities.

These facts lead to a series of urgent questions:

Just recently, Adm. Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that the mountainous border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan – where Osama bin Laden is thought to be hiding – is the site of planning for the next attack on the United States. What therefore will the U.S. do in the short-term, say, between now and January 2009, vis-à-vis this lawless region between Afghanistan and Pakistan? What are our long-term objectives on how to address this dangerous region?

The Bush Administration, Congress, and the 9/11 Commission, have recognized that the United States needs a long-term, comprehensive plan to address the terrorist threats in Pakistan. Why hasn't the administration developed such a plan?

In October last year, the U.S. State Department provided Congress with a report that certified that Pakistan was making significant and sustained progress toward eliminating the safe haven for terrorists. However, a recent GAO report noted that there was broad agreement, including among the Director of National Intelligence, U.S. Embassy officials in Islamabad, the Department of Defense, and others that al Qaeda had established a safe haven in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and reconstituted its ability to attack America. What was the basis for the State Department's finding that Pakistan was making significant and sustained progress?

A RAND study – released this past Monday – reported continued support by Pakistani government agencies of the Taliban. Is there any recent evidence of Pakistani intelligence or military officials supporting terrorist elements in acquiring or training to use nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons technology?

What do we know about the Pakistani government's involvement in nuclear and missile proliferation activities? How effective has U.S. policy been in stopping or reducing these activities?

How credible is the Pakistani government's disavowal of any knowledge of former Pakistani nuclear scientist A.Q. Khan's proliferation activities, especially in light of his very recent recanting of his confession?

How secure are Pakistani government controls on its nuclear weapons arsenal and facilities?

Today, with these questions in mind, I want us to try to do the following:

- Accurately assess – to date – the efforts of the Bush Administration’s policy towards Pakistan;
- Discuss the most effective strategic policy options regarding Pakistan, particularly with regards to ensuring the safety and security of its nuclear arsenal and addressing Islamic extremism; and
- Solicit ideas about how Congress can play an active and effective role in the path forward.

If our national security is linked to the success, security and stability of a democratic Pakistan, the U.S. has no choice but to do more. Dr. Stephen Cohen, a witness at today’s hearing, summed it up well in his written testimony: “Short term measures regarding terrorism and nuclear technology should not get in the way of long term strategies to stabilize Pakistan.” Therefore, we must work with Pakistan and our other allies to develop a strategy that creates long-term goals for success, including but not limited to more U.S. non-military assistance and greater transparency and accountability in U.S. military aid to Pakistan, as my colleague Senator Biden – a strong leader on this issue – has asserted.

Thanks again to our witnesses for taking this opportunity to talk with us today about the nature of the challenges before us, and how best to address them.

Senator Coburn.