



One Hundred Twelfth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515

December 8, 2011

Mr. Thomas Donilon
Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs
Eisenhower Executive Office Building
Washington, DC 20501-0005

Dear Mr. Donilon:

We recently returned from a bipartisan Congressional Delegation (Codel)¹ overseas, which included stops in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq. Based on this trip the Delegation developed several observations and recommendations listed below for your consideration.

We met with key officials and also the men and women of our Armed Forces.² The countries we visited have considerable security, political and economic problems which ultimately affect the security of our homeland.

¹ Congressmen Michael T. McCaul (TX-10), Gene Green (TX-29), Henry Cuellar (TX-28), Michael G. Fitzpatrick (PA-08) and Jeff Duncan (SC-03).

² **Afghanistan:** (Kabul) US Ambassador to Afghanistan Ryan Crocker and the Country Team (including Department of Homeland Security Attache and staff); Commander, International Security Assistance Force, General John Allen and staff; and Commander, International Security Assistance Force Joint Command, Lieutenant General Curtis Scaparrotti and staff.

(Khandahar/Forward Operating Base Pasab) Commander, 82nd Airborne Division, Major General James Huggins and staff and Brigade Commander, Colonel Patrick Frank, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division and men and women of the Brigade.

Pakistan: (Islamabad) US Ambassador to Pakistan Cameron Munter and the Country Team (including Department of Homeland Security Attache and staff) and Commanding Officer of the Office of Defense Representative Pakistan, Lieutenant General P. K. Keen and staff).

(Karachi) President Asif Ali Zardari and Dr. Rehman Malik, Minister of Interior, Pakistan.

Iraq: (Erbil) US Consul General Alexander Laskaris and staff and Mr. Nawzad Hadi, Governor of Erbil. (Baghdad) US Ambassador to Iraq James Jeffrey and the Country Team (including Department of Homeland Security Attache and staff); Commander, US Forces-Iraq, General Lloyd Austin; Iraq Minister of Interior General Ali Mohsen al-Ahmed; and Commander, North Atlantic Treaty Organization Training Mission-Iraq and Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq Lieutenant General Robert Caslen and staff.

The purpose of our trip was to:

- Have face-to-face meetings with United States and foreign government officials concerning stability in each region, recent counterterrorism efforts and the general threat to the United States from terrorist safe havens;
- Examine U.S. Department of Homeland Security presence overseas and discuss homeland security issues with foreign leaders; and
- Meet with U.S. Armed Forces and allied military personnel to ascertain particular local and/or regional threats and the morale and welfare of our troops in the field.

Afghanistan

OBSERVATION: Politically we have not handled Afghanistan well. The Kabul Government has little influence over the rest of Afghanistan.

RECOMMENDATION: We require a new political strategy for Afghanistan; one which decentralizes power away from the capital Kabul and empowers Afghanistan's tribal leaders in the provinces to work with the United States to fight our common enemy—the Taliban and al Qaeda.

OBSERVATION: President Hamid Karzai does not appear to be fully dedicated to the war effort. Our military forces are hamstrung by rules of engagement that are too prohibitive for coalition forces to achieve sustained tactical successes. Further, Karzai wants night raids, which are paramount to successful counterterrorism missions, to end.

RECOMMENDATION: While rules of engagement are necessary, especially in a counter insurgency, we should not forget the enemy must be sent the message they will be defeated on the tactical battlefield. Equally important is the need to continue night raids to capture or kill terrorists. We accomplish this by untying the hands of our military.

OBSERVATION: U.S. strategy for Afghanistan includes building the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) so that it can progressively take over security responsibility for the entire country by 2014 in phases, allowing Allied forces to gradually withdraw. While the first phase has been generally successful in areas with minimal insurgence presence, the remaining areas will be contested and a more difficult test for ANSF.

RECOMMENDATION: We must not lose ground we have already fought and bled over. But we cannot stay in Afghanistan forever. While the number of ANSF have increased substantially they still need to work side-by-side with Allied forces before they can assume full operational security control of areas; especially those contested by insurgent forces. What is required is a slow, deliberate withdrawal of Allied forces based, not on an arbitrary timeline, but rather conditions on the ground. Additionally we must maintain a counterterrorism force within Afghanistan for the foreseeable future.

Pakistan

OBSERVATION: Pakistan is an unstable and dangerous country because its government is weak, its economy is fragile, it possesses nuclear weapons and it has not successfully neutralized the extremist groups operating in the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA). There is growing distrust between Pakistan and the United States. And the recent resignation of Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States complicates the relationship between the two countries.

President Zardari stated he is committed to eradicating the Haqqani network in the FATA, which would be a key factor assisting our efforts in Afghanistan. However, it is not clear at this point if he has enough control of his military and intelligence apparatus to follow through.

RECOMMENDATION: We should continue to press President Zadari on his commitment to eradicate the Haqqani network and provide Pakistan the necessary training and equipment to fight this common enemy.

OBSERVATION: President Zadari said he wants more trade and less aid from the United States.

RECOMMENDATION: We should make a full court press to pass legislation for Reconstruction Opportunity Zones in Pakistan. This would significantly increase trade between the United States and Pakistan.

Iraq

OBSERVATION: Once U.S. forces exit Iraq at the end of this year the country should be able to stand on its own, continue its march toward democracy and withstand a low level insurgency. However, we should continually be concerned about Iran's attempt to use "soft power" to infiltrate Iraq through its political system and any existential threats.

Many of Iraq's current leaders were in exile in Iran or materially supported by Iran during Saddam's rule and see Iran as a mentor and an influential actor in Iraq. However, many Iraqi citizens have appeared to reject parties and factions who accept preponderant Iranian influence in Iraq. Additionally, Iraq still requires support to deal with a low level insurgency and the possibility of another country's attack.

RECOMMENDATION: We should continue to focus on the Iraqi people and support their quest for a stable democratic country. We should also have a sizable military presence in the region both to support the Iraqi Government from any existential threats and counter the continued low level insurgency.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters with you more fully. If you have any questions or would like additional information on these observations and recommendations, please contact us at (202) 225-2401, or Dr. R. Nicholas Palarino, Subcommittee Staff Director for Oversight, Investigations and Management, House Homeland Security Committee at (202) 226-8417, who accompanied us on the Codel.

Sincerely,



Michael T. McCaul
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight,
Investigations and Management

Cc: The Speaker and Democratic Leader, U.S. House of Representatives
Chairman and Ranking Member, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security
Chairman and Ranking Member, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs
Chairman and Ranking Member, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services
Chairman and Ranking Member, U.S. House of Representatives Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence
Chairman and Ranking Member, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform