



Afghanistan and Pakistan Discussion Before NATO Ministerial Meeting

Richard A. Boucher, Assistant Secretary

Remarks to Press Roundtable

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Assistant Secretary Boucher: It's good to see you all. It's good to be back. I've met some of you before, I think. Faces are familiar.

I'm Richard Boucher. I'm Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia. Everything from the Maldives to Kazakhstan, but I spend a lot of my time in Afghanistan and Pakistan and India.

I was just here a month ago and I talked to some of you. This time it's a little bit different. I'm out here in advance of...the Secretary of State is coming in tonight for the NATO Ministerial tomorrow and some meetings with NATO and EU Ministers.

It's an important moment, I think, for all of us to talk about Afghanistan and Pakistan. That's what I've been doing today; that's what she'll do tomorrow. I also will have a chance to talk to some of my EU colleagues about Central Asia and India and a few other things in my region, but the focus has been Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The Secretary is coming to advance our collective effort on what we call the comprehensive approach in Afghanistan. It's just a simple way of saying that we have not only to provide security for the people of Afghanistan, we have to extend good government and the benefits of government to them, and we have to provide economic opportunity. We've looked, over the last few months in the United States, at how we do this. Where does it work? Where does it work better? Where does it not work so well? What we are trying to do then is to talk to our NATO colleagues about some of our conclusions, but also to tell them that we've looked at this and decided we need to step up the effort across the board in all these areas -- step up the effort in providing security not only with the NATO forces and flexibility for the NATO forces, but also in training police, training army people for Afghanistan, to provide security for the people of Afghanistan, helping the government through PRTs [Provincial Reconstruction Teams], through provincial centers, through provincial justice systems and other means to extend itself into all parts of the country, and through providing the kind of economic opportunity that comes from roads and electricity and irrigation.

This is actually an important event, but it's the first in a series of events that will come up and the Secretary wanted to make sure that she was here to give a kickoff and talk to the Ministers directly about it.

We'll have next week a Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board meeting in Berlin. This is the group that coordinates assistance in Kabul, meeting with people from the capitals who provide the money and the assistance, to look together with the Afghans, who will be there, at whether we're putting the money in the right places, whether we're getting the money to where it is needed.

We'll have a series of NATO Defense Ministers meetings, NATO-EU meetings, EU-U.S. meetings, G8 meetings, and I think as we discuss Afghanistan in all these meetings we want to make sure that people continue to be focused on the comprehensive approach, on doing all aspects of this mission well. Because we're confident that if we do it and it works, we can bring security to all parts of the country, we can bring good government to the country, to the people of the country, we can bring economic development and economic opportunity to them as well.

We do this in cooperation with the Afghan government and indeed the Afghan Foreign Minister will be there tomorrow. Afghan development officials will be there next week. So this is very much a partnership for the Afghans as they develop their country and stabilize their country.

But I think overall in Afghanistan these days the U.S., NATO and the Afghan government are taking the initiative to move out military forces, provide better government, build roads, schools, things that people need.

We're going to announce significant contributions to this effort tomorrow. The Secretary will tell the Ministers what she's been able to do, and we're looking for others to step up their effort with us, step it up across the board. That's what we'll be talking about at this meeting and then the meetings that go forward in the future.

I'll stop there and take questions.

Question: You are emphasizing this time the economic approach over the political approach. I think it's the first time that you are emphasizing this aspect.

Assistant Secretary Boucher: I don't think that's true because I think I told you about it last time I was here.

Question: Well it was less than this time, because this time you are talking only about that [economic aspects]. Tell me what exactly are the ideas that Dr. Rice is going to put on the table tomorrow? The money -- and how are you going to entice the rest of the people to follow?

Assistant Secretary Boucher: One of the roles of people like me is to leave the Secretary free to put her ideas forward and put the money forward herself, so I'm not going to be able to do exactly what you asked there.

We have always talked about this approach. We have always emphasized that Afghanistan is more than a military struggle. There are enemies that we have to fight. There are people shooting at us and we're going to have to shoot back. We're going to have to prevent them from being able to mount the offensive the way they did last year.

But at the same time if you wanted to create real stability in the country, you have to do more than the military aspects. You have to have policemen to provide people with security, you have to have a justice system to provide them with justice, you have to have roads so they can develop a new economy and not depend on poppy cultivation. They need electricity; they need schools. In some ways a lot of our successes in Afghanistan have been in those areas. We've built 3,000 kilometers of roads, I think, built most of the Ring Road. Something like six million children go to school in Afghanistan now. There are government institutions and structures throughout the country. There is an army that's out in the field fighting. There are policemen who are out in peoples' towns and villages providing security.

As I said, the main conclusion is we need to do this more broadly and we need to do it in even better coordination than we do now.

Question: I was wondering, as you said you've been doing this for several years. What do you think is not working? Why hasn't it produced the kind of winning over of hearts and minds, which is what you do?

And secondly, are there any definite sums of money you're looking for from the allies? Are you looking for anything specific from the Europeans in regard to their contributions to Afghanistan?

And if I could just ask you a third question on Pakistan, there's been a lot of criticism of President Pervez Musharraf and the fact that they're not doing enough to curb the cross-border infiltration of insurgents. Are you going to send a message tomorrow on this issue, as well, to the Pakistanis?

Assistant Secretary Boucher: I think the answer to your question of what hasn't worked is, I'm not sure that's the right question.

Question: I understand you've asked yourself that.

Assistant Secretary Boucher: We asked ourselves, first, what has worked. What I would say is we've been able to identify what has worked. Certainly the task of building up national government, a basic infrastructure like the Ring Road, getting the schools back up and running, it's been an enormous task already and we ourselves have put more than \$14 billion into it so far. But it hasn't worked everywhere because we haven't been able to do it completely and successfully everywhere. Partly because of the insurgency, partly because of the government's conditions. A lot of factors. But we haven't made it work everywhere. So the goal now is to try to make it work much more broadly throughout the country.

There are parts of this country that are at peace and parts that are relatively peaceful where development projects go on, where roads are being built, where children go to school. New crops are coming up. The economy's growing. There was a billion dollars of investment in Afghanistan last year. So there are a lot of things that are working in Afghanistan, but they need to work more broadly and thoroughly. That's what we're focused on now. I'd say that's the main, what hasn't worked -- it's where hasn't this worked, where haven't we really done this yet, or where haven't we done this thoroughly and completely, and how can we do it more broadly. That's the question that we came down to.

On the second thing, specific amounts from allies: as much as they can. I think we can identify, and the Afghans can identify, the places where they most need specific projects or we need a road built here or they need money in the Law Enforcement, Law and Order Trust Fund, they need money in the Counter-Narcotics Fund, because they have launched a major narcotics effort this year. It's working in every single area of their program but they need resources to do that. As they train more police, as they train more army, they need to sustain that and to pay for those people. They don't have the government revenues yet. So things like that. They can identify infrastructure things and training programs where they need it. That's the kind of thing I think we'll talk to donors about at the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board meeting. That's the kind of thing we can talk about in Kabul on a daily basis with donors.

On Pakistan, all of us work with Pakistan and all of us know there is a problem in that the Taliban are able to go in and out of Pakistan and sort of use that territory for sustenance and regrouping and things like that. But all of us, as well, know that Pakistan has embarked on a course that's fundamentally sound and fundamentally important to us, and that is to create a more stable, more moderate nation, a democratic society. That's fundamentally important to us. If you look at most of the countries, they're really sort of like us. They all are trying to support Pakistan and these big goals, and all trying to help Pakistan be more effective in terms of how it deals with the border areas and especially how it deals with the militants, the violent extremists, the Taliban, Al Qaida, and some of the other groups.

Those people are under pressure from all sides. It may not be complete, it may not be effective every time, but if you just look at what's happened in the last few months, there have been attacks by Pakistan on training centers, on foreign fighters. There have been attacks on groups of Taliban who went across the border. We hit them on one side and when they came back to Pakistan they got hit by the Pakistanis.

I would say the Taliban is being hit from all sides. And not just with military stuff, but also by extending government authority and by providing what the people want.

Question: Can I follow up on that? Does the U.S. agree with the Pakistani approach of mining the border? And then another question related to funding. Some of us heard from one of the national briefings that there is a common NATO fund for infrastructure projects? The Germans have apparently contributed a million -- I don't know if its euros or dollars. Can you tell us more about this fund?

Assistant Secretary Boucher: I don't know about that specific fund. There are a lot of different funds. The ones that I've most looked at are the various Afghan funds, the Afghan Reconstruction Development Fund, I think it's called, and then the Law and Order Trust Fund, and Counter-Narcotics Fund. It's set up to provide a channel for people to support specific areas or specific efforts. I don't know about the NATO Civil Project Fund, but it's probably a good thing.

On the question of mining along the border, this is something that came up during my recent visits to Pakistan and Afghanistan and as we know, a lot of NATO allies also have strong views. We've discussed this, more with Pakistan than with Afghanistan, but with both. What we have said is that the issue is effective control of the border and the border area. That means an extension of government; it means the ability of government to operate in those areas with its military or other services or development projects. We have tried to support Pakistan's effort to do that.

On the specific issue of mining, a number of allies have said there are better ways to do it. President Musharraf, when he was told that by the Canadian Foreign Minister, said "okay, let's look at them." So, I think that's the next stage in this, for people with other ideas to come forward and say "here's a better way to do it" and we'll cooperate to the extent we can in helping people with other ideas or capabilities. If there's a better way to control the border, Musharraf is open to hearing it.

Question: What are the U.S. ideas on that issue?

Assistant Secretary Boucher: I don't have a formed set of ideas. I just know that we control very long, long borders with our partners on the other side quite effectively.

Question: Is it possible to control the border area on the Pakistani side, leaving the tribal leaders in Waziristan to run their own business? And say, it is not up to us, but is up to you to control it.

Assistant Secretary Boucher: That's the structure that they have and their structure is left over from colonial days. There's a lot of discussion as to whether the structures actually work in modern days, given the changes in society.

The Pakistanis are trying to make this work. They're trying to establish better control of these areas, politically, militarily, and also in terms of economic development. We're going to be a major contributor to their economic development plans for the region. But I think the jury's still out. It hasn't worked yet. At this point it hasn't established effective control over the militancy in the region or the cross-border activity which has continued at high levels. But they're determined, they say, to make it work. We'll just have to see if they can make it effective. That's to us, the issue. It's not precisely the theory of the structures; it's whether you can have effective control over violent extremists who are using the territory against Pakistan and against Afghanistan and against us on the other side.

Question: There have been frequent comments out of NATO that the U.S. would, if there was an offensive this spring, would prefer it to be NATO's offensive. Is that a view you share?

Assistant Secretary Boucher: Yes.

Question: And where do you see your allies standing on this one?

Assistant Secretary Boucher: At the front.

Question: Would you say there are some continental European countries that insist on stabilizing instead of an offensive?

Assistant Secretary Boucher: Let me put it this way: we have a lot of contact with all the allies. We work especially closely with people in the south who faced the offensive last year and have to face something again this year. I think there is widespread agreement that we don't just sit there and wait for the Taliban to come across and see what they're shooting at.

There are steps underway already. I said the Taliban were under pressure from all sides, in all different ways. I mentioned some of the examples you've seen on the Pakistani side, but there are also plenty of examples on the Afghan side where NATO's carried out operations in Panjwayi or in Helmand or other places to take away sanctuaries. Some of these areas used to be sort of Taliban heartland. NATO's gone through and run them out.

There are more police being deployed. There are better government officials, more government officials being deployed. There are aid projects up and running. So there are a lot of steps already that are being taken so that we're taking the initiative to drive the Taliban out of these areas and to be able to bring a more stable situation. So whatever the Taliban are capable of mounting this year, I would say we're all in a better position -- the Afghan government, NATO, all in a better position to deal with it.

Question: I have a question on Afghanistan and a separate one on Turkmenistan.

In Afghanistan, the EU is considering putting a police mission in place. I wonder what you think would be the added value of that, not just on technical grounds but perhaps in a political sphere. Is the EU flag more welcome there than the American flag, for example?

And the question on Turkmenistan, we're coming up to elections next month. Do you think the EU or the international community should be pressing for free and fair elections which could lead to upheaval there, real political upheaval? Or should we just wait and see what government emerges and engage with that new government?

Assistant Secretary Boucher: No.

Let me answer the first part first. The EU police mission is, I think, very important and we've coordinated very closely with them. They've had fact finding teams on the ground. They've talked closely with our people. Obviously, we put a lot of emphasis on training police, on helping the Afghan government deploy police to provide security throughout the villages and towns of Afghanistan, so the EU contribution to that is very welcome and I think very important.

No, I don't think the EU flag is more welcome than the American flag, frankly. Anybody who is there to do work and help the government and help the people is welcome.

The EU's preparations -- it's not just the money, if that's the sort of underlying question. It's not just the money. It's good to have the money to go into the training and the equipment and whatever they need, but it's also good to have the representation from different police forces, different people who know how to do things differently. Europeans have a variety of different kinds of police -- gendarmerie, guarda civil, carabinieri, treasury police and others -- each of whom has a proven record and who can make a contribution. So some of these forces are a little different than the kind of training we can provide. They can provide a different sort of mentoring, all to a high standard, similar standards. But I think having that different experience is of value to the Afghans as they develop the right capability for their country.

On Turkmenistan and the upcoming election, I do think we have to remember this is not an election that was prepared in advance, for which a base of political parties or election commissions or other things was built. This was a procedure that was established under the former ruler for succession. So it's a procedure that's being carried out.

At the same time, it is an election. It's been interesting to watch candidates go around and make promises. It will be interesting to watch the people of Turkmenistan being given a choice -- maybe not a real choice, but a choice. I think therefore you have to look at it not as an election as if it were the same as a French election or an Indonesian election. You have to look at it as one election that maybe was started with some kind of political system. And that's actually the approach that the OSCE has taken in terms of getting out there and working to do what they can with this particular event to make it more open and fair. But also looking to it as one piece of experience and moving forward towards what we might say are real elections in the future.

Question: Today in Italy there is an important vote on the re-financing of the mission in Afghanistan. There is a big problem with a part of the government which does not want to re-finance the mission. They ask to shift part of the military actions into civil operations. Where could be the place to ask the NATO forces to change a little bit their way of doing things? Italy is also thinking of an international conference for peace.

Assistant Secretary Boucher: Italy's talking about a conference on justice, on the justice system, which is something the Afghans have worked with them to do, a conference on justice. That's something we do support, yes.

Question: My first question was about where would be the place to change. Would it be this international conference? Or not? I didn't understand the way you answered, or whether you did answer the question about what hasn't worked. Perhaps more coordination of different actors -- and perhaps this international conference could be useful to launch better coordination among all the different actors.

Assistant Secretary Boucher: I don't know that a single conference will do that, but you're right. That's where the nub of it is, really. When you look at it, if a military force goes somewhere and pushes out the Taliban but there are no policemen or government structures to come afterwards, and then six months later the aid assessment mission shows up, and a year later the bridge gets built and the school gets built, that doesn't work. Where the resources haven't been coordinated we haven't been able to stabilize the place. Stabilization is not just sitting there. Stabilization is actively going out, getting rid of the bad guys, bringing in the government, and providing the roads and electricity and things that people need. So what's essential? We say do it more, more broadly, but also do it better. Do it with better coordination.

I won't get into the Italian politics of this debate, but where we have done this in the U.S. government, it's not just the military-to-military action, but they also have money to start the reconstruction, start building the bridges and things. We work in the PRTs to help the government extend itself. The Afghan government makes decisions about putting in policemen and officials. We bring the aid in, we go from the commander's money to the quick impact to the AID project.

What we want to do is make sure we do that on an international scale. So as we go to NATO and NATO looks at not only the military mission but the civilian part of it too, along with the Afghans; or we go to the JCMB, the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, we can all look at how this stuff can be better coordinated. That is one of the main points of success.

Question: And about the international conference?

Assistant Secretary Boucher: As far as I know, what the Italians have planned now is a conference on justice, on the justice sector. That's good. That's an area they've been working in and we've been working with them, the Afghans have been working with them.

Question: As we are talking about coordination. In the Riga Summit, some people put forward the idea of a "contact group." I think President Chirac was one of them, and the Joint Secretary the other. This idea doesn't seem to fly. Could you explain why this was not a good idea? And if this model of a "contact group" is not working, is there any need to find something else to make sure that the coordination of all the civilian and political efforts is secure?

Assistant Secretary Boucher: Let me put it this way. The idea of another group hasn't really caught on. We've got a lot of groups that are looking at Afghanistan. We've got NATO, we've got the European Union, we've got the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, we've got UN activities, we've got G8 and others. But the underlying

idea, and that is that we need to raise the profile of civilian work, we need to make sure that people are putting their money in the places where it's needed, people are doing what has to be done under the development plan that we all agreed to last year in London, that underlying premise, I think, is something that everybody accepts.

So what we've really discussed, taking the French proposal, looked at what's behind it and said yeah, they're right. We do need to re-emphasize, coordinate, raise the profile of civilian efforts and make sure that donors are putting their money in the right places. So rather than create another group I think there's a determination to use these other structures that we have to do that, to try to do it more effectively

Question: What about the United Nations? Are they not effective enough?

Assistant Secretary Boucher: They play an important role.

Question: Sometimes they complain that --

Assistant Secretary Boucher: Yes. Everybody complains.

Question: -- the United Nations are sitting around, they are not going out.

Assistant Secretary Boucher: I wouldn't put it that way. They're opening offices and things like that. The United Nations plays a very important role. They're co-chairs of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board. It's Afghanistan and the United Nations that co-chair that effort. In fact, the Afghan co-chair and the UN co-chair will be coming from Kabul for the conference in Berlin next week.

The UN plays a very important role. As I say, we want to see that group and those organizations play it effectively.

Question: I want you to tell me whether you think that some kind of licensed cultivation of opium to supply the pharmaceutical industry with a commodity that could be used to produce morphine. Can that ever be part of the solution in Afghanistan?

Assistant Secretary Boucher: No. I don't see it. I know this idea's been debated about in the U.S. and elsewhere. The problem with it is it says this is okay. It's not okay. It's not okay to grow drugs. In a situation where you don't have the kind of inch-by-inch control. By saying it's okay here and the guy over there thinks it's okay too, he's got another buyer for it. I don't think, certainly not in any foreseeable future that I can see, would we want to give that kind of signal in Afghanistan. The religion, the government tell them it's bad, because it is bad.

I think rather than look for easy solutions or acceptance, let's look at the countries that did get rid of the poppy crop. There's some legal cultivation in Turkey, but essentially Turkey, Pakistan, used to be major suppliers to the West, the bigger suppliers to the West, each one at a different time, other countries too, of opiates. Yet they got rid of it. How did they get rid of it? They got rid of it through consistent effort over time, through a strong government program of education, eradication, interdiction, and by building up the different rural economies, by putting in the roads and the electricity and the fruit trees and the processing opportunities and the irrigation system. It let people develop a different rural economy. That's what happened in those places and that's what we have to do in Afghanistan. But that's what we are doing in Afghanistan.

If you look at the Afghan government program, it does all those essential elements. This year it's doing them better than last year and it will have to do them even better next year. We're just going to have to keep at this. But that broad effort has been launched and we have to pursue it.

Question: This is probably an ignorant question, but I didn't really understand why --

Assistant Secretary Boucher: There are no ignorant questions. There are only ignorant answers.

Question:...why the U.S. review was sort of done in the first place. And here we are a year from the London Compact, is that sort of failing?

Assistant Secretary Boucher: No, absolutely not. It was not a review of the London Compact. It was not a review of the development strategy. We certainly feel the development strategy is sound, and what it really does is it puts in Afghans' hands the destiny of their nation. They're the ones that are coming to these conferences this year and saying here's what we're doing, here's where we need additional assistance.

No, we were looking at what we were doing and where it worked and where it didn't work. And I think there was a feeling that we were incrementally making progress, but that given the kind of insurgency threat that we faced last year that maybe that wasn't enough. What we needed to do was to be able to make significant progress across the board. That's why we've come up with significant funding.

We saw yesterday an announcement of additional troops that will be kept in Afghanistan. Then we have a variety of steps taken by us, by NATO and others to disrupt the Taliban's plans. It's really stepping up to a bigger task. Stepping up to the whole task, rather than proceeding incrementally.

Question: Could you just comment on the Washington Post story yesterday talking about the administration asking for \$8 or \$9 billion from Congress -- about 20%...--

Assistant Secretary Boucher: I can't give you numbers there.

Question: Would you get them to us tomorrow?

Assistant Secretary Boucher: Okay.

Question: You will?

Assistant Secretary Boucher: Yes. I would expect you to hear some numbers tomorrow.

Question: Are you looking for the Europeans to offer substantially more in terms of funding as well? There is an argument from some Europeans that there's plenty of money in Afghanistan at the moment and it just needs to be used more efficiently. Do you think the Europeans are pulling their weight at the moment?

Assistant Secretary Boucher: I think the Europeans are doing a lot, and I've had a lot of conversations with the European Commission that has a substantial seven-year budget. Frankly, I wish I could put together a seven-year budget. But we are committed for the long term and they're able to put together a budget to show us what they're going to spend over the long term, so that in itself is welcome.

I've talked a lot to the nations involved. European countries are doing more with police training. They're doing more through their provincial reconstruction teams, which is one of the best ways to spend money. It really makes a difference, locally and with governments. For some of the countries the military is able to carry out civil projects as an extension of their efforts. So I think there are a variety of good things being done by the Europeans.

We all should try to step up and do more. We all should try to step up and fill out the NATO requirement, drop caveats that prevent forces from being flexible, contribute to the funds that the Afghan government needs for things that they are doing already, and step up and try to make sure the effort is a consistent and coordinated and comprehensive one.

One more question, then I'm going to have to go.

Question: I was just trying to get, to put it in a nutshell, what you're saying perhaps. You seem to be saying that the Taliban insurgency is being hit on both sides. That needs to be stepped up, that security aspect of the operations. But, the balances maybe shifting towards a kind of civilian nation-building aspect over this year. Is that what you're saying?

Assistant Secretary Boucher: I really wouldn't put it that way. We've spent \$14 billion already in the civil side, so it's not like we've neglected it, nor the Afghans.

Question: No, I'm not saying you've neglected it. I'm saying that somehow the balance is shifting.

Assistant Secretary Boucher: It's not a change in balance. It's a look at taking the initiative in all areas where we're operating, taking the initiative to more military action, on providing security, providing governance, providing economic opportunity, roads and the like, and taking that initiative in a better coordinated fashion and more broadly throughout the nation.

Question: Who has to take this initiative, only the Afghan government?

Assistant Secretary Boucher: We all are. The Afghan government with us, NATO, we're all partners in this. We all need to step up and do it.

Question: Do you think that this rebuilding is possible when there is so much fighting going on in the eastern side?

Assistant Secretary Boucher: Yes. It is, because we're doing it. We're building roads and building dams and building schools. Kids are going to school.

Question: They are not destroyed after?

Assistant Secretary Boucher: A few of them are. Many of them are not. Because when you build people a school, people tend to support it and want the stability that comes from that. Now you have to provide them with a lot of other things, but if you provide it in a coordinated way, people come and support the government. We've seen that work in a lot of parts of Afghanistan. We've seen it work in the East, many parts of the East. We've seen it work some places in the South.

Question: Do you think this will put an end to the attacks?

Assistant Secretary Boucher: I think it will help us deal with the attacks. There are still going to be people trying to shoot at us. We're going to have to shoot back.

Question: Thanks.

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