

USDP Pakistan Testimony (for 4/29)

Mr. Chairman and Congressman McHugh, thank you for inviting us to testify before you today. I am pleased to have this opportunity to testify about the U.S.-Pakistan military partnership, which is an important component of the Administration's recently announced Afghanistan-Pakistan Strategy review.

Let me start by laying out the strategic context. In our recent Afghanistan-Pakistan review, we went back to the most basic question of all: what is our national interest in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region? Why spend money and put American lives at risk in a troubled region that is far from home, especially during a time of economic crisis?

You all know the answer to that question. We care about this region first and foremost because we must defeat al Qaeda and its extremist allies. We must ensure that they will have no safe havens from which to attack us or our allies.

9/11, the bombings in London, Madrid, Islamabad, Mumbai – we have all learned painfully that in our globalized world, we cannot ignore the spread and growing lethality of violent extremist groups.

Right now, the situation in Pakistan is dire. The insurgency along Pakistan's western border has been steadily expanding. Supported by a well-financed transnational network, Pakistan's militants are entrenched in growing swathes of territory.

In the Swat Valley, extremists already exercise effective control. And just last week, militants established bases in the neighboring district of Buner—only 60 miles from the capital, Islamabad.

With instability and violence increasing, many Pakistani civilians and political leaders fear violent retaliation if they openly oppose extremist groups.

As a result, opportunities for Al Qaeda and associated terrorist groups are increasing. From safe havens within Pakistan, these groups have demonstrated a growing ability to plan and stage deadly attacks against U.S.,

coalition and Afghan forces operating across the porous border. Within Pakistan, the government is increasingly at risk. It is, therefore, imperative that we do whatever we can to prevent further instability.

At this critical time, our military partnership with Pakistan is crucial. Pakistan is a vital partner in the fight against Al Qaeda. Pakistan, though fragile, is a sovereign and democratic state. The Pakistani security forces have linguistic, cultural and geographic knowledge we cannot hope to match, and we need their active cooperation to defeat the extremist groups that operate within their borders. Yet the Pakistani forces lack the equipment and training they need to be effective in counterinsurgency operations.

But as you know, forging an effective partnership with the Pakistani military has not been a straightforward matter, and our efforts have been hampered by several problems. One is a matter of threat perception. Another is a "trust deficit." And a third relates to their capabilities.

Start with the problem of threat perception. The Pakistani military has historically viewed India, not internal extremist groups, as the most existential threat to Pakistan. As you know, we are energetically seeking to reduce tensions between Pakistan and India, both of which are our strategic partners. But despite recent confidence-building efforts, it has often been difficult to persuade our Pakistani counterparts to shift resources towards dealing with extremist militants in the western border regions.

There is also something of a trust deficit between the U.S. and Pakistan. From Pakistan's perspective, U.S. support has been inconsistent and lop-sided over the years: we have oscillated between treating Pakistan as a pariah and as a critical ally. We now face a legacy of mistrust.

There is mistrust on our side, too. After years of investment in Pakistan's military, we have seen little progress in countering violent extremism, and too many setbacks. Some have raised concerns that elements within the Pakistani military and intelligence services may be sympathetic to militant groups, leading to increased caution on our part.

Finally, forging an effective military partnership with Pakistan is hampered by relative lack of counterterrorism and counterinsurgency capabilities on the Pakistani side. The Pakistani security forces are often called upon to undertake sustained counterinsurgency operations in areas

where they have not historically operated, where they face terrain and cultural challenges as daunting as the ones our forces face in Afghanistan – and *our* forces have the best training and equipment in the world. If we want our Pakistani partners to succeed, we need to make sure that they too have the appropriate training and equipment for the job.

Mr. Chairman, some of these issues can be addressed through diplomacy and other tools. Others will be harder to get at. But notwithstanding these challenges, we continue to believe, more strongly than ever, that our military partnership with Pakistan is a critical component of our overall strategy in the region.

We share common interests: if militants were to topple the Pakistani government, this would be as devastating for the Pakistani people, including its security forces, as it would be for us. Both Pakistan's civilian leadership and its military leadership increasingly recognize this, and have demonstrated growing political will for the fight against extremism. It bears emphasizing that Pakistan's security forces have made many sacrifices in their efforts to combat internal militancy: thousands of military personnel and civilians have lost their lives to violent extremism.

Notwithstanding the challenges, we have also had some notable successes when we have worked closely with the Pakistani military. Our work with the Frontier Corps has resulted in improved cross-border coordination and has increased the effectiveness of Frontier Corps operations in Bajaur, Mohmand, and Khyber Agencies. In addition, the Pakistani special forces leadership has noted a significant difference between soldiers who have trained with the U.S. and those who have not – measured by mission success and number of casualties. Further, we note that helicopter units we have trained are now capable of conducting emergency medical evacuation of Army and Frontier Corps personnel from the FATA.

To build on those successes and prevent catastrophic instability, we must deepen our partnership with the Pakistani security forces, and provide them with the counterterrorism and counterinsurgency capabilities they so urgently need. While overcoming divergent threat perceptions and a history of mistrust will take time, building Pakistan's capabilities to take on insurgents is something we can and must begin doing now.

The proposed Pakistan Counterinsurgency Capability Fund (PCCF) is critical to that effort. The PCCF will give the Secretary of Defense with the concurrence of the Secretary of State the funding required to effectively build the Pakistani military's counterinsurgency capabilities. With PCCF, our commanders can apply resources when and where they are most needed in urgent and rapidly evolving situations.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, one of the key conclusions of our recent review of Afghanistan and Pakistan strategy was that Afghanistan and Pakistan must be viewed as a single theater. Events in Pakistan profoundly affect events in Afghanistan, and vice versa. But even as we acknowledge this in our regional strategy, we recognize that the specific challenges we face in Pakistan are not identical to the challenges we face in Afghanistan, although they are deeply intertwined.

The PCCF, a temporary authority, will help us implement the Administration's strategy, by giving us enhanced flexibility in responding to the needs of Pakistan to match the flexibility we have in Afghanistan, through the Afghan Security Forces Fund. With the PCCF, we can fund train-and-equip efforts involving Pakistan's paramilitary Frontier Corps and special forces, and expand assistance to the Pakistani Army. Flexibility has been crucial to the progress we have made in Iraq, and we want to capture that lesson as we strive for success in Pakistan as well.

I want to make it clear to the Committee that we see the PCCF as temporary and complementing, not replacing, existing authorities and funding streams. Foreign Military Financing and Section 1206 funding continue to be critical to strengthening the U.S.-Pakistan bilateral relationship over the long-term. Similarly, Coalition Support Funds, which reimburse Pakistan for military operations conducted in support of U.S. efforts in Afghanistan, remain vital to sustaining the operational tempo of the nearly 100,000 Pakistani troops deployed in the North West Frontier Province and the FATA.

We also believe we must address the historic imbalance in our funding to Pakistan by increasing non-military forms of assistance. Eliminating terrorist safe-havens and defeating extremist insurgent groups requires us to go beyond military means, and address the root causes of violent extremism. We are firmly committed to taking a "whole of

government” approach, and we strongly support the broad expansion of non-military assistance to Pakistan.

We are hopeful that the Kerry-Lugar bill will provide the needed boost to rule of law and sustainable economic development efforts, with appropriate measures to ensure accountability. Moreover, we also support the establishment of Reconstruction Opportunity Zones in Pakistan and view them as a vehicle to help Pakistan in the development phase of the counterinsurgency process.

Nonetheless, PCCF is vital to the Administration’s strategy. We understand that some in Congress worry that PCCF represents a further encroachment by DoD on the Secretary of State’s authorities. We understand this concern, but do not think that is the case here. As you know, Secretary Gates and I strongly support a “whole of government” approach to complex security issues such as those we face in Pakistan, and that must include building capacity at the State Department. But the threat in Pakistan is urgent, growing, and constantly evolving, and the PCCF offers vital flexibility and resources our commanders will need to adapt our near-term military assistance efforts to the Administration’s new strategy.

The PCCF will align authorities and funding to develop Pakistan’s capability in current counterinsurgency operations with DoD’s responsibility to implement the security portion of the Afghanistan-Pakistan strategy, including our own current operations.

All that said, let me emphasize that the PCCF is no panacea. The challenges we face in Pakistan are complex. As we increase the resources we put into counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations, we may see an increase in violence and instability in the short run. As in Iraq, things may get worse before they get better.

Given this rapidly changing and complex environment, Mr. Chairman, we oppose rigid conditionality, such as that we see in the proposed H.R. 1886, the “Pakistan Enduring Assistance and Cooperation Enhancement Act of 2009.” While we applaud the goal of increasing accountability, we believe that HR 1886 is too inflexible, especially with regard to the conditions and limits it would place on the equipment we provide to our Pakistani partners. In our view, H.R. 1886 would severely constrain the

Executive Branch and reduce our ability to adapt to the fluid situation on the ground.

We are committed to continuously evaluating our own strengths and weaknesses, as well as those of our Pakistani partners. We support the approach to accountability as set forth in the Biden-Lugar Bill introduced in the last Congress. Independently, the Administration and Defense Department are also in the process of developing robust measures of effectiveness that will allow us—and you—to hold us and our Pakistani partners accountable. These measures of effectiveness will allow us to measure our progress over time, and will inform future decisions on resources, force levels and tactics.

We believe, however, that the measures of effectiveness we use to evaluate our progress must be tightly linked to the President's strategy for the region, and that such measures of effectiveness are preferable to those that stem from legislation. We understand, Mr. Chairman, the importance of transparency and accountability, and you can feel confident that we will continuously and rigorously evaluate both our own efforts and those of our Pakistani partners. If what we do does not work, Mr. Chairman, we will retool our strategy. The last thing we want to do is continue to pour resources into ineffective programs.

Mr. Chairman, terrorism and insurgency in Pakistan are growing, and threaten regional stability and our national security. But with the proposed PCCF, we believe we can take immediate steps to increase the effectiveness of our partnership with Pakistan's security forces, something that is vital to defeating terrorism and extremism in the region.

I want to once again thank you and members of the Committee for allowing us this opportunity to testify today. I look forward to your questions and comments.