



Pakistan's Fata Challenge: Securing One of the World's Most Dangerous Areas

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Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee: with the successful transition to elected government in Pakistan, we have an historic opportunity to help the people of Pakistan build a base of democratic stability from which to counter violent extremism and fight international terrorism. This is vital to Pakistani interests, U.S. interests, and international interests, which are not limited to Afghanistan and Pakistan's other immediate neighbors. Pakistan is the world's second most populous Muslim state. It has nuclear weapons, and it is on the front lines of the battle against international terrorism, the most serious security threat of the 21st century.

The United States is determined to help Pakistan meet the challenges it faces. We believe that the newly elected government of Pakistan welcomes our support with a determination as strong as our own. But before I discuss U.S. strategy vis-à-vis Pakistan, and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in particular, I want to make three overarching points.

First, the terrorist problem in Pakistan and the terrorist problem in Afghanistan are inextricably intertwined. Today I will focus on Pakistan, but I ask that you keep in mind the fact that we must have a fully coordinated strategy that addresses the ground truth on both sides of the Pakistani-Afghan border. What happens on the Afghan side of the border has a direct impact on Pakistan just as what happens on the Pakistani side affects Afghanistan. Terrorists and violent extremists continue to exploit Pakistan's rugged tribal areas as safehavens and cross the border to attack Afghan and Coalition forces in Afghanistan. We therefore must find ways to more effectively coordinate and synchronize operations by both nations, and thereby reduce the operating space where our common enemies function.

Second, we must design and execute our strategy to assist Pakistan in such a way as to persuade other nations—many other nations—to take the problems the Pakistanis confront as seriously as we do. Regional, Middle Eastern, European, African, and Asian interests are just as threatened by international terrorism and violent extremism as our own interests here in the Western Hemisphere. So we must have a strategy of broad diplomatic engagement in support of specific programs resourced by the United States. In short, we see U.S. objectives in Pakistan and Afghanistan border regions as one single theater of operations that will require all of our skills—diplomatic, military, and developmental.

Third, the U.S.-Pakistan relationship runs much deeper than our mutual counterterrorism priorities. While the battlefield for the war against terrorism will be fought in the border regions, our programs to work with the people and government of Pakistan will be critical to our success in these areas. We are committed to building a broader, long-term relationship with Pakistan.

Given the gravity of the dangers Pakistan confronts on a day-to-day basis, a broad but integrated commitment of assistance on the part of the United States is essential. This is true nation-wide, as well as with respect to the tribal areas on which we focus today. Nation-wide, our strategy is to help the newly elected government of Pakistan strengthen democratic institutions, provide children with a modern education, reform economic structures, provide the people with food and energy, and transform the military into a more capable security force for the nation.

And again, let me emphasize that our commitment to Pakistan applies to the tribal and frontier areas as well as the nation as a whole. Our goal is to help integrate these areas into the national and world economy, to help the new government bring the people there into the life of their own country, to help provide a modern education that draws children away from madaris, and to help the people of the area provide their own security and resist the pressures of extremists.

Nowhere are common U.S.-Pakistan interests more in evidence than in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. But to address those interests, we first must help the Government of Pakistan exert its authority there. That is crucial to ameliorating the governance, economic, health, education, and security problems faced by the FATA's inhabitants on a daily basis.

Government of Pakistan Efforts

We welcome the fact that the new government in Pakistan wants to implement a comprehensive strategy to better integrate the Federally Administered Tribal Areas into Pakistan's economy and body politic. Government and political leaders more generally recognize that they cannot rid Pakistan's territory of violent extremists by military means alone—they also must create an environment inhospitable to terrorism and extremism. The Government's objective is to persuade the people living in this traditionally autonomous region that their interest lies in supporting the Government's efforts to bring development to the area. By thus improving the relationship between the region and the rest of Pakistan, the government hopes to weaken the sway of terrorists and extremists, demonstrating to the population that they will benefit by supporting the government and denying terrorists safehaven.

The Government of Pakistan's comprehensive "DFrontier Strategy" emphasizes economic and social development, while strengthening effective governance. As part of its Frontier Strategy and after consulting with all interested parties including the public, the Government also has developed a nine-year, two-billion-dollar Sustainable Development Plan for the tribal areas. The Government's plan addresses the basic unmet needs that underlie the existing social and economic problems and outlines measures to improve services, upgrade infrastructure, increase government capacity, promote the sustainable use of natural resources, and bolster activity in the trade, commerce, and industrial sectors. This will be a demanding effort. Pakistan's tribal areas have some of the worst social and economic conditions in the world. In some areas, the female literacy rate is as low as 3%. There is little access to safe drinking water or to even rudimentary health care. The system of public education is largely nonexistent.

But the Government of Pakistan's decision to partner with the United States, the United Kingdom, and other international partners, such as Japan and Australia, in this effort demonstrates Pakistan's commitment to deny terrorists and violent extremists the ability to exploit its territory. We applaud the fact that in 2007, the Government made concerted efforts to reach out to its partners in various international fora, presenting its plan to members of the World Bank, the Group of Eight, the European Union, and various bilateral donors to coordinate political and donor support. This is consonant with the emphasis we place on broad international engagement with Pakistan. For our part, the United States has made a five-year \$750 million commitment beginning in FY 2007 in support of infrastructure development, maternal & child health, education and capacity building initiatives in the tribal areas and border regions of Pakistan. Additional resources are requested in the FY 2009 emergency supplemental to support the Security Development Plan.

U.S. Agency for International Development Frontier Strategy

The U.S. Agency for International Development's economic development programs in the tribal areas and border regions of Pakistan target areas that have few jobs, low literacy, little hope and are vulnerable to militant infiltration. Just as our earthquake assistance to Pakistan in 2005 and 2006 had a profoundly positive impact on the

people of Pakistan—generating good will that has lasted to this very day—we believe our support for developing the tribal areas will bring stability and prosperity.

USAID's program is fully operational in the tribal areas, with 16 Agency projects currently operating there. This month, for example, USAID will refurbish several hospitals' delivery and surgical facilities, will train maternal health and other medical professionals, and will continue working with a local official to restore police authority to a central market. Other projects initiated in April, developed through a consultative approach that aims to build confidence and trust between the Government of Pakistan and tribal communities by identifying and implementing small community improvement opportunities, were in the health, drinking water, girls' education, government capacity building, and media sectors. Pakistani government partners stated in April that the competitive and open procurement process established by USAID in implementing these small projects has increased their credibility in the communities in which they work. These are just a few examples of the activities we are pursuing to improve lives and enhance governance in the tribal areas, Northwest Frontier Province, and Balochistan. Congressional support for the \$60 million Economic Support Fund request for Pakistan in the Fiscal Year 2008 supplemental will allow the Agency to continue advancing these goals.

We also believe Reconstruction Opportunity Zones can play a major role in promoting long-term economic development and stability of this remote part of Pakistan. We believe ROZs will provide the crucial economic component that complements our military and political strategies. We were very happy to see introduction of ROZ legislation by Senator Cantwell and her co-sponsors, and we hope that Congress will soon pass legislation to make ROZs a reality. In addition, our security and development programs in the tribal areas are critical to achieving our highest objectives in the War on Terror. These programs will boost sustainable, private sector-led economic development and provide long-term, legitimate livelihoods for citizens in impoverished areas at the epicenter of the war on terror and drugs. Just as important, these efforts are essential to maintaining forward momentum in building a long-term, broad-based relationship with the Pakistani people.

Security Development Plan

Providing a secure environment that fosters economic and social development is critical. As the Committee knows, in March 2006, President Musharraf asked President Bush for U.S. assistance in developing and funding a comprehensive strategy to deny terrorists and violent extremists the ability to exploit the under-governed Federally Administered Tribal Areas which they have exploited as a hideout and safehaven. The United States agreed to provide support.

Further, the Government of Pakistan has launched a program to increase the size of its Frontier Corps, a Pashtun-based paramilitary force raised in the border region. Members of the Frontier Corps have unique advantages operating in the tribal areas due to their linguistic and ethnic ties. The United States is supporting this expansion and is helping to train and equip the Frontier Corps to enhance Pakistan's ability to secure its border and provide security to the indigenous population.

The United States Government's principal contribution to establishing security in the FATA and the western border region is the Security Development Plan, a six-year multi-faceted program to enhance Pakistan's ability to secure its border with Afghanistan. The Plan was co-developed by our Embassy in Islamabad and U.S. Central Command, and fully coordinated with the Government of Pakistan. In Fiscal Years 2007 to 2008, the Department of Defense provided over \$200 million. In Fiscal Year 2009, the Administration is seeking at least \$100 million in Foreign Military Financing for the plan in the bridge supplemental request. Congressional support for the supplemental request will be instrumental in the U.S. Government's ability to implement the Security Development Plan.

We are working hard to ensure that Pakistan has the necessary will and tools to conduct aggressive and sustained counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations in the years to come. To cite an important example, the Department of Defense will equip and train special operations units of the Pakistan Army. Training will focus on the Special Services Group and its helicopter mobility unit, the 21st Quick Reaction Squadron, to enhance its ability to execute combat missions in the border region. Our programs are providing those forces with the skills needed to permanently prevent militants and terrorists from exploiting Pakistani territory as a staging ground for attacks in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and beyond.

We are also enhancing coordination among Afghan, Pakistani, U.S., and NATO forces in the Afghanistan/Pakistani border region. Again, this effort focuses on the full internationalization of the response to a problem that threatens the world community at large. On March 29, we and our partners inaugurated the first of several Border Coordination Centers at Torkham, Afghanistan. The Centers will make it possible for Pakistani, Afghan, and International Security Assistance Force representatives to more effectively coordinate to counter efforts by our common enemies from using their superior knowledge of the terrain to skirt both sides of the rugged border to avoid engagement.

Supporting the Pakistani People

As the Committee knows first-hand, we worked hard to help Pakistan establish conditions conducive to free, fair and transparent elections for the February 18 parliamentary elections. We are now working equally hard with Pakistan's leaders, including the moderate Awami National Party which won elections in the Northwest Frontier Province, to explore how we can help the new Government of Pakistan extend the authority of the Pakistani state to the tribal areas. We are encouraged by the electoral mandate that these parties possess. Our Embassy continues to meet with representatives from all Pakistani political parties that have a stake in the new government.

As we support Pakistan's democratic transition, we continue to cooperate closely with Pakistan's government and military to combat violent extremism. The media has reported that the Government of Pakistan has been exploring peace agreements with certain groups in the tribal areas. Given past failures, we have raised our concerns about these negotiations with Pakistan's leaders. It is our belief that a moderate government with a democratic mandate has been and will continue to be a good partner in this extremely difficult effort.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, Pakistan's tribal areas are of immense importance to the security of Pakistan and the world. That is why we must utilize a multifaceted approach to help the newly elected Pakistani Government and the Pakistani people bring these remote areas into the Pakistani mainstream and render them permanently inhospitable to terrorists and violent extremists.

Thank you very much.

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