



REMARKS BY

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AT

THE ATLANTIC COUNCIL

“A NEW STRATEGY FOR AFGHANISTAN & PAKISTAN”

**WASHINGTON, D.C.
APRIL 9, 2009**



Ambassador Haqqani,
Mr. Kempe,
Distinguished members of the Atlantic Council,
Friends,

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to discuss the new U.S. strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is an honor to be here, and I am pleased to be speaking alongside my friend and colleague Ambassador Haqqani.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Seven years ago, the rapid collapse of the Taliban created unrealistic and excessive optimism, while the war in Iraq distracted attention and resources from Afghanistan. The state-building efforts were uncoordinated and ad hoc, with excessive emphasis on creating new parallel institutions while overlooking substance and sustainability. Subsequently, the Afghan war theater lacked a practical unified military command and proper coordination of all civilian, political, military, national and international actors.

On March 27th, President Barack Obama announced a new U.S. strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan with a clear objective “to disrupt, dismantle and defeat Al Qaeda and its safe havens in Pakistan, and to prevent their return to Pakistan and Afghanistan.”

The Afghan Government welcomed the new policy and is particularly in favor of the attention and resources being allocated to increase the size of the Afghan army and enhance the capacity of the Afghan Government to deliver services and provide protection to its citizens. The new strategy rightfully places the challenges facing Afghanistan in a larger regional context, demands changes in management of resources and focuses on aid efficiency and agriculture.

To build a clear consensus, the US Administration called upon a range of stakeholders to offer input and insight, including the Afghan and Pakistan governments. We greatly appreciate the leadership of Secretary Hillary Clinton, General Jones, Mr. Bruce Riedel and Ambassador Holbrooke who included our views on the regional aspects of fighting terrorism.

In providing an Afghan voice to the discussions on the new U.S. strategy, we stressed a number of issues, most of which are properly reflected:

First, improving the quality and quantity of US and NATO troops coupled with the rapid expansion of the Afghan security forces, as the sustainable and cost-effective long-term solutions. We are pleased with President Obama’s deployment of 21,000 additional U.S. troops to Afghanistan, and his commitment to see the Afghan National Army to grow initially to 134,000 and the Afghan National Police to 82,000 by 2011. Afghanistan will need a 250,000 strong army and a 140,000 strong police force under the current security threat level.

Second, we asked for additional resources to enhance the capacity of the Afghan Government to deliver services and provide protection to its citizens. After the defeat of the Taliban, inadequate



emphasis was placed on building government institutions. However, where investments were made, such as on ANA, healthcare and education, impressive results were and continue to be achieved.

Third, we requested that development projects be more carefully tailored to national and local needs, that additional aid be channeled through the government budget or through trust funds, and that more resources be allocated for agriculture.

Fourth, we asked that the problem of terrorism and the solutions to it be viewed in a regional context. We do not believe that we can overcome the terrorist threat without the active and sincere cooperation of Pakistan. Fortunately, we now have closer relations with the elected civilian President of Pakistan than we have ever had before. Of course, we believe there is a gap between the sincere commitment of the civilian leadership and the delivery by Pakistan's security institutions. We are looking to our international partners to help bring those two closer together.

Fifth, set forth clear parameters of engagement and negotiation with the Taliban.

Sixth, make fighting narcotics part of the mandate of fighting terrorism and insurgency. Combating narcotics is fundamental to state-building and counter-terrorism. There is no silver bullet or magic crop. It is a long term undertaking that will include development, institution building and law enforcement. It should be noted that where the Afghan Government is present, poppy fields are absent. Five provinces in volatile Southern Afghanistan produce 91 percent of the country's poppy. Of this amount, 66 percent comes from Helmand where most of the fighting is taking place and where 7,000 British soldiers are fighting the Taliban. Last year, there was a 19 percent decline of poppy cultivation.

The best strategy to fight narcotics is to prevent cultivation, improve interdiction, provide alternative livelihoods, supply sustainable rural development, and increase access to credit and market for legitimate crops.

Seventh, corruption is a serious challenge that must be addressed. It is a symptom of bad governance, not its cause. There has been limited investment in building the capacity of the Afghan Government. It is a problem that we are addressing. Six hundred officials were arrested in the past 10 months. However, corruption does not lead to terrorism. No one will wear a suicide belt and attack a downtown hotel because he was asked for a bribe at a municipal office.

The new strategy includes most of these provisions. Herein lies the main challenge that we face in moving forward – the actual implementation of this strategy. In the past, it has not been a shortage of strategy, rather it was the limited financial resources and weak political will to implement the strategy that caused the failure.

To successfully implement this new strategy, we will need both resources and coordination. President Obama seems focused on doing what is needed, not merely doing what can be done with the limited resources available. Of course, the U.S. cannot do it alone, and aid from European countries – especially for training and development – is needed. We welcome to see



our European partners pledge \$100 million for training and \$500 million in humanitarian aid last week. The new strategy seeks to create a synergy between different degrees of commitment and capabilities that our partners bring to the table.

Just as important as the resources is the coordination of international efforts in Afghanistan. With 40 countries contributing troops and almost 60 countries providing resources and assistance, it is vital that our efforts neither be redundant nor contradictory.

There is one last public relations obstacle we will have to overcome in implementing this strategy – the talk about reduced expectations, reductionist and defeatist approaches by the media. I can't argue strongly enough against these defeatist attitudes which feed into the Taliban and Al-Qaeda propaganda that questions NATO and the United States' staying power.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

When we have worked together and allocated the proper resources, we have seen impressive gains and achievements. Over 6 million children can now attend school, and we have together built a national army that is well-respected and effective. We drafted and passed a new constitution. The Afghan people overwhelmingly supported the U.S.-led effort to defeat the Taliban, and they have bravely sustained themselves through untold number of difficulties in hopes for a country at peace and in which plurality and prosperity are more than catch-phrases.

With the sincere cooperation of Pakistan and the proper resources for the implementation of the new strategy, President Obama's US strategy can produce positive results in the coming year.

Building a peaceful, pluralistic and prosperous Afghanistan would not only benefit the Afghan people, but it would also serve to help stabilize the region and secure the world. We know from history what happens when Afghanistan is left behind and forgotten or when shortsighted policies use extremism as a tool of foreign policy.

The Afghan people are energized once again by the renewed attention and recommitment of resources and are determined to rebuild their country.

A pluralistic Afghanistan is not a luxurious dream of the Afghan people and government. Let me be clear on one point, we are not imposing a Jeffersonian democracy on Afghanistan—we are preventing the imposition of dictatorship, terror and tyranny. To suggest that Afghans do not deserve or demand peace, pluralism and human rights is wrong and racist. The Afghan people are resilient, moderate and pragmatic. They strongly desire a peaceful life and a democratic government.

Thank you.