



REMARKS BY

AMBASSADOR SAID T. JAWAD

AT

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“A NEW STRATEGY FOR AFGHANISTAN”

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Mayor Bill Purcell,
Dr. O'Sullivan,
Dear students and faculty,
Friends,

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to be in this prestigious forum with you to discuss the need for a new strategy for moving forward in Afghanistan. I would like thank Harvard University, the John F. Kennedy School of Government, the Institute of Politics, my dear friend Dr. Meghan O'Sullivan, Noelia Rodriguez and Eric Rosenbach. I am honored to be here and very grateful for your interest.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Seven years after the fall of the Taliban, Afghanistan is facing increased security challenges. Unfortunately, our significant historic achievements are overshadowed by the sharp increase in violence in the south, rising suicide attacks and roadside bombings in cities and along major highways.

Looking back, the United States came to help in Afghanistan after Al Qaeda's vicious attack on September 11, 2001. The immediate objective of the U.S. intervention was to eliminate terrorists and destroy Al Qaeda bases. While state institutions were systematically destroyed by 30 years of war, the international community chose to apply a "light" footprint approach instead of choosing the "right" footprint of institution-building. This was the original sin.

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.

Truthfully, the Taliban were neither eliminated nor fully defeated. They were pushed into the countryside and across the border.

Subsequently, the security situation deteriorated due to the limited number of troops on the ground, the total negligence of building the police force and judicial system, the underinvestment in building the national army, and the meager resources applied to building the capacity of the Afghan government to deliver services and provide protection to its citizens.

Furthermore, the regional aspect of terrorism was ignored. Terrorist sanctuaries in Pakistan remained operational, and there was misplaced trust in Pakistan's military dictatorship's ability to fight terrorism. Our region was further destabilized by two lethal trends in our neighborhood: the *Pakistanization* of Al Qaeda and the *Talibanization* of Pakistan.

The involvement of NATO in Afghanistan was premature and lacked strategic coordination. Some non-U.S. NATO forces were ill-prepared for counter-insurgency operations. NATO forces still lack equipment, helicopters, air power and transport, intelligence and logistical capabilities



as well as special operation units, precision artillery and, more importantly, funding for reconstruction activities. These forces are also bound by close to 60 “national caveats” that limit their effectiveness. However, they are an important political asset for all of us.

Subsequently, the Afghan war theater lacked a practical unified military command and proper coordination of all civilian, political, military, national and international and actors.

Very limited attention was paid to the reform of the justice system, leaving us with no option but to accept stability over justice as a short-term solution. Human rights violations and war crimes remained unpunished, creating a culture of impunity for spoilers and criminals.

Those who claim that the international community is not succeeding militarily in Afghanistan should know that they never fully tried. We all did what we could with the limited military resources and reconstruction funds we had at our disposal. We could not do what was necessary due to shortages in funds and troops. Today, we are at a turning point. If we do not choose the right strategy, it can turn into a tipping point.

A peaceful, pluralistic and prosperous Afghanistan is not a luxurious dream of the Afghan people and government. It is a necessity for peace in Afghanistan, stability in the region and security in the world. Let me be clear on one point, we are not imposing Jeffersonian democracy on Afghanistan – we are preventing the imposition of dictatorship, terror and tyranny. We have never asked to be the 51st state of the United States as Senator John Kerry recently indicated, but 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. The women of Afghanistan have not forgotten the terror and tyranny of the Taliban – and they never will.

We welcome President Obama’s plan to unveil a new comprehensive U.S. strategy by the end of this month in the Netherlands and then to NATO countries in Prague. We are grateful for being officially consulted during this process. In our view, the new strategy must have the following components:

- Surge of U.S. troops
- Build the Afghan Government’s capacity to deliver services and eliminate corruption
- Eliminate the sources of training, indoctrination and ideological, financial and logistical support in Pakistan and the region
- Make fighting narcotics, part of the mandate to fight terrorism
- Set forth clear parameters of peace and reconciliation with certain elements of the Taliban
- Enhance civilian and military coordination and create a truly unified command center with full Afghan participation and US lead
- Increase reconstruction assistance and aid effectiveness

We also appreciate President Obama’s plan to send 17,000 additional troops to Afghanistan, especially the Marines being deployed in the south. Afghanistan does not have enough security forces, both international or Afghan, to effectively secure and defend the country, protect the



people and provide the vital space for development. While increasing the quantity of the troops is important, proper attention should be paid to enhancing their quality and fighting capabilities.

American soldiers have proven to be the best fighters and partners to our national army. The deployment of new troops will allow for surgical operations instead of relying on aerial bombings that lead to unacceptable levels of civilian deaths.

However, the long-term and most sustainable strategy is to build an effective and well-equipped Afghan army and police force to fight terrorism and create a reliable partner in this volatile region. We have 80,000 well-trained troops in our National Army, and by 2010 it will grow to 134,000 troops. It is one of Afghanistan's most professional institutions and a good example of the successes that can come from proper investment by the U.S. and true partnership with Afghans. Since the Afghan National Army took control of security in Kabul in August 2008, violence has dropped 40 percent. We need to increase this number to at least 250,000 to relieve U.S. and NATO troops from harms way as they bravely have done in the last seven years.

We need a similar type of support for our police force, which lacks the proper training, equipment and discipline.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We will not succeed in Afghanistan without the sincere cooperation of Pakistan. Today, fortunately, we have excellent relations with the new civilian government of President Asif Ali Zardari. The political leadership of Afghanistan and Pakistan have never been as close and trustful of each other as they are now.

We believe the new civilian government of Pakistan is sincere in fighting extremism and terrorism. President Zardari himself has been a victim of terrorist violence. However, the government lacks the capacity to wage this fight. The Pakistani military, on the other hand, has the capacities to do so, but not the commitment. Despite the atrocities committed by the extremists against the people of Pakistan and Afghanistan, the army does not consider them as the main enemy. The perceived enemy has always been and remains to be India. In this battle, extremists are considered an ally. The U.S. is working to bring the government and the army together and help Pakistan and India overcome their mutual mistrust.

Of course, security is not just an absence of violence – it is also the presence of opportunity. While the Afghan economy has grown by an average of 14 percent annually since 2002 and investment opportunities in mining and telecommunications have provided needed revenue and jobs, unemployment and poverty still prevail. The new strategy should provide for sustainable economic development and that ensure that aid money is more effectively used and channeled through the Afghan government budget.

One Afghan model to follow is the successful National Solidarity Program, a rural development initiative that empowers local communities to decide what their needs are and offers them small grants to address them. So far the NSP has provided \$560 million in grants for 46,000 small-scale development projects in 22,000 villages in every corner of Afghanistan.



Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our President has welcomed President Obama's remarks about talking with the Taliban. In fact, the process of talking with individual Taliban commanders has been going on for the past six years and about six hundred mid-level Taliban commanders have joined the peace process. Some even occupy public offices in government and parliament. However, we have to determine precisely who we want to talk to and what the parameters are for those discussions.

The Taliban are politically divided into three major parties: the Quetta Shura led by the Mullah Omar, Miran Shah Shura of the Haqqani Network and the Shamshatoo Camp and Bajawa Shuras by Hezb-e Islami of Hekmatyar. The Taliban are also divided into three distinct ideological groups.

First, the ideological Taliban, those with the capital "T." This faction is affiliated with Al Qaeda and the regional and international terrorist networks. Contrary to Iraq, the history of Al Qaeda and the Haqqani and Hekmatyar networks are deeply rooted in the three decades of fighting together against the Soviet Union and cemented by inter-marriages. This group of Taliban is irreconcilable and will not rest until their main objectives of eliminating the West and its allies are met. They must be defeated or eliminated by force. We mustn't forget that in 2001, there were talks with the Taliban for it to deliver Osama bin Laden, but those yielded no success. Furthermore, since 2004, talks with similar groups in Waziristan, Pakistan and FATA have led to regroupings, extended control and brutalities against the Pakistani people.

The mid-level Taliban commanders are the mercenaries that have been recruited by drug traffickers or intelligence agencies and those Afghans that are either antagonized by U.S. and NATO military operations or have been mistreated by the Afghan government officials. These groups can be reconciled through dialogue, buying off, bribery and coercion.

The third and largest group is the Taliban with the lowercase "t," or the "paycheck Taliban." These foot soldiers are mostly unemployed, uneducated and brain-washed young Afghans that are paid \$300 a month and have been misled by the enemy with the promise of paradise or further financial rewards. This group needs employment and education, not too much dialogue. We need to give them jobs and hope. Therefore, we need clear parameters for dialogue and focus on the second and third groups.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Negotiation and reconciliation with the Taliban will succeed only if we talk to them from the position of strength and with a clear and strong stand on human rights, women's rights and the Afghan Constitution. These are principles on which there cannot be concession or compromise. Unfortunately, some of the current "defeatist" and "reductionist" media statements and policy recommendations in the U.S. and European capitals feed the Taliban propaganda, which is mainly based on questioning the U.S. and NATO's staying power. NATO and U.S. forces are



saying that we are not winning in Afghanistan, implying that the Taliban are not losing. If they are not losing, why should they talk to us?

The definition of victory for the Taliban is simple: to destroy and disrupt. As long as they are able to do so, they will not feel compelled to talk.

We must have a coordinated and unified approach on talking to the Taliban, and the conduit should be through the Afghan government. However, Afghanistan is not Iraq. The Sunni awakening by arming tribal militias will not work, due to the fact that the pristine tribal structure of Afghan society has been under attack for the past 30 years.

The true and traditional tribal leaders are now replaced by warlords and narco-traffickers. To arm them will have serious repercussions to the stability of Afghanistan and the region.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Fighting 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.

Corruption is a serious challenge that must be addressed. It is a symptom of bad governance, not its cause. There has been very 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 should focus on capacity-building and paying reasonable salaries to judges, civil servants and police officers.

Let me finish by reminding you of what has been accomplished in Afghanistan. Today 6.4 million children are going back to school, 36% of them girls. We have a democratically elected president and 28% of parliament is comprised of women. We have a vibrant and free media, with hundreds of private radio and TV stations. Schools and health clinics have been built with your assistance in far-flung villages that had never had them. Women have become elected officials such as senator and ministers; they are voters, students, teachers, and entrepreneurs.

I disagree with those that argue that being in Afghanistan is dangerous. The fact is that, as we remember from the post Cold War era, not being in Afghanistan is much more dangerous. "No



problem of human destiny is beyond human beings,” as President Kennedy once said. Our challenges are serious, but our determination to succeed is stronger.

The Afghan people are determined to rebuild their country and are very grateful for your support and friendship. The success of the new strategy depends on how many resources will be allocated for its implementation. Thank you.