

**Statement of John F. Tierney
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives**

Hearing on “Afghanistan and Pakistan: Resourcing the Civilian ‘Surge’”

As Prepared for Delivery

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Good morning. Today, the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs will explore the civilian surge component of the President’s new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan. The President has said that a “campaign against extremism will not succeed with bullets and bombs alone.” As such, a critical part of the Administration’s new strategy for the region is to significantly increase civilian staffing.

The plan to surge upwards of 500 civilians over a short time horizon into Afghanistan and Pakistan enters uncharted waters for civilian agencies such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the State Department, and the U.S. Agency for International Development. The last time economists, city managers, agronomists, law advisors, and accountants were recruited and deployed *en masse* to a combat theater goes back at least four decades to U.S. support for “pacification programs” during the Vietnam War. This Hearing examines what we have learned from more recent civilian deployments in post-conflict states like Iraq and failed states like Sudan.

We have gathered this experienced panel of Administration officials to share with us their plans to recruit, train and deploy this new cadre of civilians. We are counting on them to ensure that the best trained staff will be deployed to today’s most challenging foreign theater: Afghanistan and Pakistan.

As a Subcommittee with interagency jurisdiction, we are especially interested in the extent of collaborative planning among the civilian agencies to support a whole-of-government approach to reconstruction and development. The Subcommittee is also keenly interested in how the civilian agencies are coordinating with DOD on pre-deployment training so that we are using existing resources and not re-inventing courses, curricula, and other educational materials for our civilian surge recruits.

Some observers of recruitment programs have said that finding additional qualified civilians has been hampered by the ongoing heavy demand in Iraq for civilian and military construction experts. In their view, those not working in Iraq are already in Afghanistan. As such, there is a risk that new applicants responding to today’s personnel recruitment ads will not have the requisite skills and/or overseas experience to hit the ground running.

If this is accurate, civilians recruited for the surge will need considerable training and country familiarization before deploying if they are to be effective upon arrival. A scarcity of qualified civilians has led to numerous media reports suggesting that DOD, rather than the civilian agencies, is likely to fill most of the billets.

Another issue that ‘surge civilians’ will face in country is how well they are integrated within, and coordinated with, the military. Many surge recruits will likely be assigned to Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) led by military officers. The PRTs will likely have a total of 3 or 4 diplomacy, reconstruction, and aid development subject matter experts from USAID, the Department of State, the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Justice.

The ‘surge civilians’ working for Ministries in Kabul or the provinces will also need to coordinate with the military to avoid duplication of effort and strengthen local capabilities. While the military has worked hard to establish and implement a “unified military command,” it seems desirable to have an analogous “unified civilian command.” And, ultimately, both commands will need to be fully integrated to achieve long-lasting, positive results.

Frankly, the call for a civilian surge in Afghanistan is not new. In late 2008, pre-dating the new Afghanistan/Pakistan Strategy, the U.S. Embassy in Kabul requested a major increase in government civilians in such areas as governance, rule of law, development and diplomacy to be deployed at provincial and district levels. Regrettably, we are told that this request was not fulfilled. The State Department’s Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS), created in 2004, was chartered to lead U.S. efforts to respond to crises in failing, failed, and post-conflict situations like the present one in Afghanistan. It is not clear to me what role S/CRS can or will play in Afghanistan and Pakistan at this critical moment.

I am pleased to have with us today Administration officials from the State Department, USAID, USDA, and the Department of Defense. We want to know how you plan on staffing the Afghanistan/Pakistan civilian surge in regards to recruitment, training, deployment, and retention. We want to know what lessons you have learned in Iraq and elsewhere in terms of utilizing civilians in complex operations. Additionally, the Subcommittee would like to hear how to best expand and institutionalize a ready-to-deploy civilian workforce that keeps in step with increasing security challenges from weak and failed states.

I look forward to hearing how each of your agencies intends to translate the President’s strategy into operational reality.