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Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

**"Extremist Madrassas, Ghost Schools, and U.S. Aid to Pakistan: Are We Making
the Grade on the 9/11 Commission Report Card?"**

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Good morning. America awoke to a new, and terrible, chapter in our history on September 11, 2001. We watched in horror as the Twin Towers disintegrated, as a Pentagon wing collapsed in flames, and as a Pennsylvania field smoldered with wreckage. Every American knows, with clarity, where he or she was that morning. Today, more than five-and-a-half years later, the National Security Subcommittee begins a series of hearings asking whether the United States has an effective, long-term strategy for confronting international terrorism.

We begin with the 9/11 Commission, whose report cautioned us of a "generational struggle" whose "long-term success demands the use of all elements of national power: diplomacy, intelligence, covert action, law enforcement, economic policy, foreign aid, public diplomacy, and homeland defense."

The 9/11 Commission also warned that "[i]f we favor one tool while neglecting others, we leave ourselves vulnerable and weaken our national effort." The Commission stressed the importance that any offensive efforts "be accompanied by a preventative strategy that is as much, or more, political as it is military."

So let's now ask the question, "how are we doing?"

Today we will explore U.S. policy toward Pakistan, its radical religious schools known as madrassas, and its dysfunctional education system and what impact this all has on our long-term national security.

The 9/11 Commission had some specific advice on Pakistan, stressing "[i]t is hard to overstate the importance of Pakistan in the struggle against Islamist terrorism;" pointing out that "[a]lmost all of the 9/11 attackers" spent some time in Pakistan and "traveled the north-south nexus of Kandahar-Quetta-Karachi;" and warning of Pakistani madrassas that "have been used as incubators of violent extremism."

The 9/11 Commission urged the U.S. government to "support Pakistan's government in its struggle against extremists with a comprehensive effort that extends

from military aid to support for better education, so long as Pakistan's leaders remain willing to make difficult choices of their own."

In December 2005, the 9/11 Commission's Public Discourse Project issued a report card.

As you can see, we got a C+ for our efforts in supporting Pakistan against extremists. The Report Card notes: "U.S. assistance to Pakistan has not moved sufficiently beyond security assistance to include significant funding for education efforts. Musharraf has made efforts to take on the threat of extremism, but has not shut down extremist-linked madrassas or terrorist camps. Taliban forces still pass freely across the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and operate in Pakistani tribal areas." This despite the fact that President Musharraf has repeatedly promised to crack down on extremist madrassas.

- In 2003, Musharraf stated: "We must finish off religious extremism....We must not use the mosques to spread hatred."
- In January 2005: "[T]he use of mosques and seminaries as producers of hate and extremism must be stopped."
- In August 2005: "[W]e will not let any madrassa harbor terrorists or teach extremism and militancy."

But the madrassas remain.

Here's a clip from a recent FRONTLINE entitled, "Return of the Taliban."

Last month, I led a Congressional Delegation to Pakistan and Afghanistan with Subcommittee Members Betty McCollum and Patrick McHenry as well as Education and Labor Chairman George Miller. In Afghanistan, senior U.S., NATO, and Afghan military officials told us of their forces being continually attacked by Taliban foes who plan and stage their insurgent operations in Pakistan before pouring across the border to kill our troops. But if we think these Pakistani breeding grounds of terror only threaten Afghanistan, think again.

The 2005 London subway terrorist bombings involved at least one British national trained in a Pakistani madrassa. And just last week, terrorists were convicted in the United Kingdom in a conspiracy to conduct an attack there with fertilizer based bombs. Five of the seven men tried attended either madrassas or training camps in Pakistan.

And yet these extremist madrassas remain open for business.

As we sit here in this hearing room today, madrassas affiliated with the Red Mosque in Islamabad continue to flout Pakistani national laws by squatting on national

land; harboring foreign terrorists; moving large numbers of Burqa-clad women into the compound as protection; establishing religious vigilante raids on shopkeepers; and assaulting and kidnapping "indecent" women. And these madrassas have threatened a campaign of suicide bombings if they don't get their way.

This picture of red Mosque madrassa students burning books, CDs, and DVDs was taken just two days after our congressional delegation left Pakistan. During our stay, we were told of women in Islamabad having acid doused in their faces for their failure to wear burqas and harassment of women driving cars, and we saw first-hand billboards from which women's facial images had been ripped away for their "immodesty." The extremists once confined to the outer reaches of Pakistan are bringing their venom right to the heart of Pakistan's manicured capital. Last week, our own State Department concluded, and I quote:

"Pakistan remains a major source of Islamic extremism and a safe haven for some top terrorist leaders." Extremism and jihadi curriculum at madrassas is only one side of the problem, however, as Pakistan's public school system has utterly failed to provide a viable alternative for millions of poor Pakistani families.

In December 2005, the 9/11 Commission gave the U.S. government a "D" grade for not doing enough to support secular education in Muslim countries. The Report Card warned: "The U.S. has no overarching strategy for educational assistance and the current level of education reform funding is inadequate."

The U.S. government also received a "D" for funding educational and cultural exchange programs designed to foster mutual understanding between the United States and Muslim countries. The grade specifically notes recent closures of American libraries in Pakistan.

This bar chart compares our Pakistan education assistance aid versus our military support. I know it's hard to see the bar for the education funding, which is 15 times less than our military assistance.

Remember that the 9/11 Commission spoke of the need for using all the tools in our toolbox and of the need in Pakistan specifically for a, and I quote: "comprehensive effort that extends from military aid to support for better education." But in its latest budget submission, the Administration requested a 33 percent cut in funding for "Development Assistance" to Pakistan, a category that includes funding for "basic education programming."

And here's the scope of the problem we're up against. UNICEF estimates that some 13 million 5-9 year-old children - out of some 27 million total- are not enrolled in school at all. That's nearly half of all Pakistani kids. And of those students who are enrolled, approximately 50 percent will drop-out before completing primary education.

Looking at the scope of the problem, the 9/11 Commission's Vice Chairman Lee Hamilton characterized our education aid levels as a "drop in the bucket." A recent Washington Quarterly article co-authored by one of today's witnesses put it this way - the U.S. is spending a scant \$1.16 per child per year for more than 55 million school-aged Pakistani children.

Pakistan itself only spends a miniscule two percent of its gross domestic product on education. Untrained, unmotivated, and absenteeism-plagued teachers have led to the phenomenon of so-called "ghost schools" - where buildings sit idle or filled with students chaperoned by "minders" rather than educators. All of us hope to support the Pakistani people in their efforts to achieve for themselves a stable, prosperous, and free nation.

But our national security interests in the future of Pakistani children is much more acute. Will we be safe over the next 5, 10, or 20 years as thousands - perhaps millions - more kids learn jihad at extremist madrassas instead of learning real-world skills to become productive citizens in their communities? The Pakistani people are treading water during a rising tide of extremism; a tide that threatens their society and their children's futures; a tide that exposes our soldiers in Afghanistan to attack; and a tide that threatens us here at home to a gathering, new generational wave of terror.

As the 9/11 Commission warned in a world of great mobility and even greater weapons: "the American homeland is the planet." We simply must follow the 9/11 Commission's sage advice to use all elements of our power - including military might, public diplomacy, intelligence capabilities, and development assistance to ensure that such waves of terror never build and never crash again on our shores. That, to me, is the job facing all of us today.