

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

**“Oversight of U.S. Efforts to Train and Equip Police and Enhance the Justice System in Afghanistan”**

**As Prepared for Delivery**

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Good morning. Today, the National Security and Foreign Affairs Subcommittee continues its sustained oversight of U.S. efforts against terrorism.

As part of this effort, this Subcommittee has sent three Congressional Delegations to Afghanistan and Pakistan since 2007.

During our most recent trip – just a few months ago – we sat down with Afghanistan’s Minister of Justice, His Excellency Sarwar Danish.

It was our last meeting in Afghanistan. The sun was nearly touching the mountains encircling Kabul. We’d just completed an ambitious schedule of travel to Herat and within Kabul, visits with U.S. troops and our top generals, with President Karzai and local Afghan leaders, with our U.S. diplomats and development workers from the field.

Justice Minister Danish – along with just about everyone else we met with during our trip – stressed the vital importance of police as the first line of security and the rule-of-law.

He also stressed that police cannot be viewed in isolation. Afghans need professional, honest, and well-trained judges, we need prosecutors and defense attorneys, we need a functioning and legitimate legal code; and we need safe and secure jails.

And he laid out the immense challenges facing his fellow Afghans – how, after 30 years of conflict, Afghanistan face widespread illiteracy; decades of exodus of educated Afghans; rampant corruption fueled by the opium trade; and competing, urgent national priorities.

There appears to be a growing consensus forming about the vital nature of the justice sector in Afghanistan; that this is absolutely crucial in efforts to stabilize Afghanistan and to bring law-and-order to all Afghan communities.

Rule-of-law is necessary to successfully take on the terrorists and insurgents and to quell the insecurity and root out the corruption that provides space and opportunity for the Taliban, narcotics traffickers, and warlords to prosper.

The International Crisis Group put it this way in a report entitled, “*Reforming Afghanistan’s Police*”:

*Policing goes to the very heart of state building.... A trusted law enforcement institution would assist nearly everything that needs to be achieved in [Afghanistan].*

A recent RAND Corporation study commissioned by the Secretary of Defense on counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan even placed the importance of capacity-building in the police ahead of that in the Afghan army:

*Building the police in counterinsurgencies should be a higher priority than the creation of the army because the police are the primary arm of the government in towns and villages across the country.... They have close contact with local populations in cities and villages and will inevitably have a good intelligence picture of insurgent activity.*

The State Department Inspector General’s Office recently stressed:

*Confidence that the government can provide a fair and effective justice system is an important element in convincing war-battered Afghans to build their future in a democratic system rather than reverting to one dominated by terrorists, warlords and narcotics traffickers.*

The next question that must be asked is, how are we doing?

With us today is the head of the Government Accountability Office team who just completed an in-depth, on-the-ground assessment of U.S. efforts to develop Afghan National Security Forces, including the Afghan National Police. The GAO offers a stark answer to the question of how we’re doing. The GAO reports:

- Not a single Afghan police unit is “*fully capable of performing its mission.*”

In fact, “96 percent (296 of 308) of uniformed police districts and all border police battalions (33 of 33)” were rated at the lowest of four possible capability ratings.

- “*Less than one-quarter of the police have mentors present to provide training in the field and verify that police are on duty.*”
- “[S]hortages remained in several types of police equipment that Defense considers critical, such as vehicles, trucks, and body armor.”

- *“[T]he slow rate at which the rule of law is being implemented across Afghanistan inhibits community policing,” and “police in the field also face persistent problems with pay, corruption, and attacks.”*

The GAO’s specific findings are both shocking and disheartening, but consistent with other recent analysis. Just last week, RAND noted that while *“the [Afghan army’s] competence improved in the early stages of the counterinsurgency campaign,”* the *“same cannot be said for the [Afghan police], which suffered from a lack of attention, low levels of initial funding, no initial mentoring, corruption, and a paucity of loyalty to the central government.”*

As of 2007, 65 percent of the Afghan people believe that the Afghan police force *“is unprofessional and poorly trained.”*

The State Department Inspector General recently concluded, and I quote, *“the continuous turnover of U.S. government staff and the conflicting priorities among even U.S. government entities, in the context of the desperate straits of the Afghan justice sector, indicate that the challenges of the [rule of law] coordinator will only continue to grow.”*

Startlingly, the State Inspector General found that *“no one [U.S. government] source seems to have a clear picture of the scope of U.S. expenditure in this field.”*

Perhaps the following images are worth a thousand words when it comes to the challenges faced by the Afghan justice sector ....

*[SHOW CLIP of Afghan prison bombing.]*

And these breakdowns in the Afghan justice sector have real-world consequences. Taliban fighters have reportedly now taken control of seven villages a dozen or so miles from last Friday’s prison break.

Some commentators have dubbed our efforts in Afghanistan “The Forgotten War.” Unfortunately, the GAO finds some evidence to substantiate this moniker.

GAO notes that while, *“according to Defense Officials leading the effort in Kabul, the shortage of mentors is the primary obstacle in building a fully capable [police] force,”* defense officials also conclude that *“the shortfall in military mentors for the [police] is due to the higher priority assigned to deploying U.S. military personnel elsewhere, particularly Iraq.”*

Afghan police equipment shortages are also partly attributable to, and I quote, *“competing priorities, particularly the need to equip U.S. military personnel elsewhere, particularly Iraq.”*

Nearly seven years after the invasion of Afghanistan, I don't think anyone can take a whole lot of pride in the answer to the question, "how are we doing?"

But the stakes here are enormous – put simply, effective and honest Afghan police and a well-functioning justice system are critical to the future of Afghanistan and to the security of all Americans. We simply must do better, and time is of the essence.

I look forward to engaging in this critical dialogue, and while I am deeply frustrated at the lack of progress over these last seven years, I hope this Subcommittee can play a constructive role in the path ahead.