

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: Accountability Community Oversight of a New Interagency Strategy”

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Good morning. Today’s hearing could not be more timely. In the coming days, the commanding general in Afghanistan, Lt. Gen. Stanley McChrystal, is expected to request that President Obama provide significant additional numbers of troops for our effort there. Meanwhile, in the coming weeks, Congress will consider final passage of a bill to triple U.S. aid to Pakistan – to almost \$1.5 billion per year.

In short, the United States is on the verge of doubling down on its commitment of troops and treasure to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

As we learned in Iraq, however, a sudden increase in conflict resources exponentially increases the likelihood of waste, fraud, and abuse. Unfortunately, some of our programs in Afghanistan and Pakistan to date have been flawed and have lacked basic accountability measures.

For example, last year, the Subcommittee and GAO conducted major investigations of the Coalition Support Funds program by which the United States reimburses Pakistan for expenses it incurs in certain counter-terrorism operations. This program has represented the bulk of U.S. aid to Pakistan in the past seven years – over \$6.7 billion to date. The investigations found that

there were no receipts for a significant portion of U.S. reimbursements to Pakistan and that the program lacked basic accountability provisions. Further, this reimbursement program is not designed to improve the Pakistani military's capabilities for counterterrorist or counterinsurgency operations.

In Afghanistan, a January 2009 GAO report brought attention to the significant lack of accountability for 242,203 small arms provided to the Afghan National Security Forces. DoD's Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A) could not provide records, did not track serial numbers, or could not locate a significant portion of the weapons provided. In addition, the report drew attention to the inability of the Afghan National Security Forces' to safeguard these weapons.

While we are at a crossroads in U.S. policy here in Washington, D.C., we are also at a crossroads on the ground in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Trends in Afghanistan have not been good. The Taliban is resurgent from Kandahar to Kunduz. Three weeks ago, Afghanistan held presidential and provincial elections amid this long deteriorating security situation. The results of that election are not final, but there are credible reports of widespread fraud. Any cloud over the legitimacy of Afghanistan's president would only add to the sense of insecurity that threatens international efforts there.

In Pakistan, the story is more mixed. After years of inconsistent attention to the threat posed by extremist militants, Pakistan's civilian leadership and military forces seem to have gathered the resolve necessary to confront the challenges they face. They harnessed the political will and manpower to retake the Swat valley and the adjoining areas of the Malakand region. Many Pakistani soldiers paid the ultimate sacrifice during this campaign. Unfortunately, it stalled at the border of South Waziristan – by all accounts a hotbed of militancy, including senior al Qaeda leadership. The killing last month of Baitullah Mehsud was a significant development, but it must be followed by concerted efforts by the Pakistanis themselves to bring security and reassert the authority, and services, of its government in these troubled regions.

In Afghanistan, U.S. and international reconstruction and aid efforts face a daunting challenge trying to rebuild a war-torn country in the midst of an active insurgency. In Pakistan, security challenges and political sensitivities currently restrict inspectors general from the mobility, access, and presence necessary to the task.

The principal question guiding today's hearing is whether the accountability community is

prepared to ramp up its own efforts to mirror the massive increase in resources that the U.S. will devote to Afghanistan and Pakistan in the coming years. Frankly, I have serious concerns about the community's collective ability to provide comprehensive oversight coverage that keeps pace with the rapid bloom in U.S. activities in the region, especially given the enormous burdens already borne by these offices.

The threshold challenge they face is security. After numerous trips to Afghanistan and Pakistan, I am acutely aware of the strict limits imposed on personnel in-country. However, a sustained physical presence in Afghanistan and Pakistan is crucial to establishing the relationships necessary to receive tips of waste, fraud, and abuse. Three-week rotations are not enough to establish the informal interactions that can provide vital inside information about flawed and failed activities.

Another concern I have is the accountability community's coverage of U.S. aid to Pakistan. Security challenges make U.S. aid efforts all the more vulnerable to waste, fraud, and abuse. In particular, I have serious questions regarding oversight coverage of aid efforts in the Northwest Frontier Province and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas.

Finally, I would like your thoughts on Ambassador Eikenberry's call to "Afghanize" more of our aid efforts in order to build Afghan government capacity. How will the U.S. government accountability community navigate its role in overseeing such aid programs?

We count on the Inspectors General and GAO as bulwarks against waste, fraud, and abuse. Especially in these difficult economic times, we must demand absolute transparency and accountability for every last taxpayer dollar.