

**SECRETARY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
TESTIMONY TO THE
SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE
WASHINGTON, DC
THURSDAY, JUNE 23, 2011**

Thank you, Chairman Kerry and Senator Lugar. It is always a pleasure to see you.

As the President said last night, the United States is meeting the goals he set for our three-track strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The military surge has ramped up pressure on al-Qaida terrorists and Taliban insurgents. The civilian surge has bolstered the Afghan and Pakistani governments, economies, and civil societies and undercut the pull of the insurgency. The diplomatic surge is supporting Afghan-led efforts to reach a political solution that will chart a more secure future for the region. All three surges are part of the vision for transition that NATO endorsed in Lisbon and that President Obama reaffirmed last night. As he said, Afghans have to take responsibility for their own future.

Today I want to echo the President's statement and update you on our civilian efforts. I also want to answer your questions about the road ahead. Because, despite this progress, we have to stay focused on our mission. As the President said, "We have put al-Qaida on a path to defeat, and we will not relent until the job is done."

First, let me say a word about the military effort. Last night the President explained his plan to begin drawing down our forces next month and transitioning to Afghan responsibility. I will leave it to my colleagues from the Defense Department to discuss the specifics. But the bottom line, as the President said, is that we have broken the Taliban's momentum. So we begin this drawdown from a position of strength.

Now, let me turn to the civilian surge. We appreciate the attention you have devoted to this, because improving governance, creating economic opportunity, and supporting civil society is vital to solidifying our military gains and advancing our political goals.

Since January 2009, we have more than tripled the number of diplomats, development experts, and other civilian specialists on the ground in Afghanistan, and we have expanded our presence in the field nearly six-fold. Those new civilians have changed the way we do business, focusing on key ministries and sectors, and holding ourselves and our partners to higher standards.

There should be no doubt about the results, despite very difficult circumstances: Economic growth is up, and opium production is down. Under the Taliban, only 900,000 boys and no girls were enrolled in schools. By 2010, 7.1 million students were enrolled, 37 percent of them girls. Hundreds of thousands of farmers have been trained and equipped with new seeds. Afghan women have used more than 100,000 micro-finance loans. Infant mortality is down 22 percent.

What do all these numbers tell us?

First, that despite all the many challenges that remain, life is better for most Afghans. The Karzai government has many failings, to be sure. But more and more people can see progress in their streets, schools, and fields. And we remain committed to fighting corruption and strengthening the rule of law.

The aim of our civilian surge was to give Afghans a stake in their country's future and provide credible alternatives to extremism and insurgency – it was not, nor was it ever designed, to solve all of Afghanistan's development challenges. Measured against these goals, and considering the obstacles we face, we are and should be encouraged by how much has been accomplished.

Most important, the civilian surge has helped advance our military and political objectives. Let me offer an example.

Last November, USAID began funding the reconstruction of irrigation systems in Wardak province, providing jobs for hundreds of workers and water to thousands of farmers. In March, insurgents demanded that the people abandon the project and support their spring offensive. The people refused. Why should they trade new opportunities for more violence and chaos? Frustrated, the insurgents

threatened to attack the project. Local shuras mobilized and sent back a clear message: We want this work to continue; interfere and you will become our enemy. The insurgents backed down.

We have now reached the height of the civilian surge. Any effort of this size and scope will face considerable logistical challenges, and we are working hard to strengthen oversight and improve effectiveness. We have learned many lessons, and we are applying them. And the efforts of our civilians on the ground, working in some of the most difficult conditions imaginable, continue to be nothing short of extraordinary.

Looking ahead, as transition proceeds, we will shift our efforts from short-term stabilization projects to longer-term sustainable development that focuses on spurring growth and integrating Afghanistan into South Central Asia's economy.

Now, the third surge is our diplomatic effort in support of an Afghan-led political process that aims to shatter the alliance between the Taliban and al-Qaida, end the insurgency, and help to produce a more peaceful and prosperous region.

To begin, we are working with the Afghans on a new Strategic Partnership Declaration that will provide a long-term framework for our bilateral cooperation and bolster Afghan and regional confidence that we will not abandon Afghanistan. As the President said last night, this will ensure that we will be able to continue targeting terrorists and supporting a sovereign Afghan government.

It will provide a backdrop for reconciliation with insurgents who meet clear red lines. They must renounce violence; abandon al-Qaida; and abide by the constitution of Afghanistan, including its protections for the rights of women. As I said in February, those are necessary outcomes of any negotiation.

In the last four months, this Afghan-led political process has gained momentum.

Twenty-seven Provincial Peace Councils have been established in Afghanistan, and the Afghan High Peace Council has stepped up its efforts to engage civil society and women, even as it also begins reaching out to insurgents.

Including women and civil society in this process is not just the right thing to do – it is also the smart and strategic thing to do. Any potential for peace will be subverted if women are marginalized or silenced. And the United States will not abandon our values or support a political process that undoes the social progress that has been made in the past decade.

But we believe that a political solution that meets these conditions is possible. The United States has a broad range of contacts at many levels across Afghanistan and the region that we are leveraging to support this effort, including very preliminary outreach to members of the Taliban. This is not a pleasant business. But history tells us that a combination of military pressure, economic opportunity, and an inclusive political and diplomatic process is the best way to end insurgencies.

With bin Laden dead and al-Qaida’s remaining leadership under enormous pressure, the choice facing the Taliban is clear: Be part of Afghanistan’s future or face unrelenting assault. They cannot wait us out. They cannot defeat us. And they cannot escape this choice.

Special Representative Marc Grossman is leading an active diplomatic effort to build support for a political solution. What we call the “Core Group,” of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the United States, has met twice and will convene again next week. At the same time, we are engaging the region around a common vision of an independent, stable Afghanistan and a region free of al-Qaida. And this effort is paying off. India, Russia, and even Iran are now on board.

Just this past Friday, the United Nations Security Council voted unanimously to support reconciliation by splitting its sanctions on al-Qaida and the Taliban, underscoring that the door is open for the insurgents to abandon the terrorists and seek a better path.

We welcome these steps. And for the United States, the key diplomatic priority – and indeed a lynchpin of this entire effort – is closing the gap between Kabul and Islamabad. Pakistan simply must be part of this process.

Earlier this month the two countries launched a Joint Peace Commission, with substantive talks at the highest levels. Also significant was the full implementation on June 12 of the Transit Trade Agreement, which will create new economic opportunity on both sides and lay the foundation for a broader vision of regional economic integration and cooperation. It took decades to negotiate this agreement, including great effort by the late Richard Holbrooke, but trucks are now rolling across the border.

I recently visited Pakistan and had very candid discussions with its leaders. The United States has clear expectations for this relationship. As President Obama said last night, the United States will never tolerate a safe-haven for those who would kill our citizens.

We are looking to Pakistan to take concrete action on the goals we share: defeating violent extremism, which has taken so many innocent Pakistani lives; ending the conflict in Afghanistan; and ensuring a secure, stable, democratic, prosperous future for Pakistan and the region.

There are obviously tough questions to ask. And many causes for frustration. But we should not overlook the positive steps of recent weeks. Counterterrorism cooperation continues, and several key extremists have been killed or captured.

As I told the Pakistanis, America cannot and should not solve Pakistan's problems. They have to do that themselves. But nor can we just walk away from this relationship and ignore the consequences.

Pakistan is a nuclear-armed state sitting at the crossroads of a strategic region. And we have seen the cost of disengaging from this region before. As Secretary Gates has stressed, we cannot repeat the mistakes of 1989.

That is why it is so important that we have the resources to continue implementing our strategy. The State Department is following the Pentagon's model and creating a special emergency fund – an Overseas Contingency Operations account – that separates normal operating costs from these extraordinary war-time expenses.

Now, we are painfully aware of today's fiscal reality. And I know it may be tempting to peel off the civilian elements of our strategy that make fewer headlines. But as our commanders on the ground will tell you, that would be a serious mistake. The three surges are designed to work hand-in-hand. You cannot slash one and expect the other two to succeed. And ultimately, we are saving money – and lives – by investing now in getting this right.

And let's not forget: An entire year of civilian assistance in Afghanistan costs Americans the same amount as just 10 days of military operations.

So Mr. Chairman, Senator Lugar, I thank you for this opportunity to explain our strategy and why we feel it is so vital to America's national security. I hope we can work together to implement and improve it.