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UNITED STATES SENATOR - DELAWARE

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BIDEN on Pakistan: We Need a Serious Overhaul

BIDEN Lays Out Four Critical Elements for New Approach to Pakistan: 1) Triple non-security aid, to \$1.5 billion annually, sustained over 10 years; 2) Tie security aid to performance; 3) Help Pakistan enjoy a ‘democracy dividend’; and 4) Engage the Pakistani people, not just their rulers.

BIDEN: “We can’t keep jumping from one crisis to the next, relying on exceptional diplomats and military officers to save us from disaster. We need a new strategy, to set the relationship on a stable course.”

Washington, DC – Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee **Joseph R. Biden, Jr. (D-DE)** chaired a hearing this morning entitled: “*A New Strategy for Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan.*”

In the coming weeks, Senator Biden and other members of the Committee will be introducing new legislation which will lay the foundation for a new approach to relations with Pakistan.

The Committee first heard testimony from Administration officials Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard Boucher, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs Mitchell Shivers and USAID Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator for Asia Mark Ward. During the second witness panel, the Committee heard from former CENTCOM commander General Anthony C. Zinni, USMC (Ret.) and former U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Wendy Chamberlin, also President of the Middle East Institute.

The full text of Sen. Biden’s opening statement from this morning’s hearing is below.

“For far too long, the U.S.-Pakistan relationship had been in desperate need of a serious overhaul. For too many years, through too many Administrations, it has been unsteady balancing-act in one of the most turbulent spots on earth that in the last year alone has seen a Taliban resurgence, a State of Emergency, the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, the return of democratic government and now political stalemate.

“The core of the problem is this: The relationship between the U.S. and Pakistan is largely transactional - and this transaction isn’t working for either party. From the American perspective, we’ve spent billions of dollars and have gotten far too little to show for it. From the Pakistani perspective, America is an unreliable ally that will abandon Pakistan the moment it’s convenient to do so, and whose support to date has done little more than bolster unrepresentative rulers, both in and out of uniform.

“We believe that we’re paying too much, and getting too little. Pakistanis believe exactly the opposite. Both sides feel that the costs of the relationship may soon outweigh the benefits. The status quo is unsustainable. We’ve got to move from a transactional relationship -- the exchange of aid for services -- to the type of normal, functional relationship we enjoy with all of our other military allies and friendly nations.

“Like any major policy shift, to gain long-term benefits we’ll have to shoulder transitional costs. Here, as I see it, are the central elements of a new plan.

- Triple non-security aid, to \$1.5 billion annually. And make this a long-term commitment, over ten years. This aid would be unconditional: it’s our pledge to the Pakistani people. Instead of funding military hardware, it would build schools, clinics, and roads and help develop the Federally Administered Tribal Area, where extremism is taking deeper root.
- Tie security aid to performance. We’re spending over \$1 billion annually, and it’s not clear we’re getting our money’s worth. We should be willing to spend more if we get better returns—and less if we don’t.
- Help Pakistan enjoy a ‘democracy dividend.’ Back in November, I called for \$1 billion in the first year of Pakistan’s return to democratic rule. The Supplemental now before the Senate contains a down-payment on this Democracy Dividend-- \$150 million. This money will help moderate, secular political leaders show the Pakistani people that they can deliver the goods.
- Engage the Pakistani people, not just their rulers. We need a broad-based engagement, not just government to government, that gets into the issues that matter to Pakistan, not just to us.

“The plan I propose would fundamentally change the dynamic between the U.S. and Pakistan. Here’s why:

“**First**, a significant increase in non-security aid, guaranteed for a long period, would help persuade the Pakistani populace that America is not a fair-weather friend, but an all-weather friend; it would also help persuade Pakistan’s leaders that America is a reliable ally.

“Pakistanis suspect that our support is tactical and temporary. They point to the aid cut-off that followed the fall of the Soviet Union, to our refusal to either deliver or refund purchased jets throughout the 1990s, and to our blossoming relationship with rival India – something I support. Many Pakistanis believe that the moment Osama bin Laden is gone, U.S. interest will be gone too. So Pakistani policy-makers hedge their bets, and Pakistani citizens view us in a hostile light.

“When U.S. aid makes a real difference in people’s lives, the results are immediate and lasting. After the devastating earthquake in 2005, American Chinooks delivering relief aid accomplished far more to improve our standing with the Pakistani people than any amount of arms sales or debt rescheduling.

“**Second**, tying security aid — now about three-quarters of our package— to results would push the Pakistani military to finally crush Al Qaeda and the Taliban. Our best shot at locating Bin Laden and his crew, and of shutting down the Taliban and the next generation of terrorist outfits, lies in committed partnership with the Pakistani security services, who need to be better trained.

“The military is designed to deal with a land war with India, not counter-insurgency. Their performance to date has been decidedly mixed: we’ve caught more terrorists in Pakistan than in any other country— but Pakistan remains the central base of Al Qaeda operations. To put things in perspective: the \$11 billion we’ve spent on Pakistan in six years is less than we spend on Iraq in six weeks.

“The Pakistani security services will be vital players for the foreseeable future. We cannot simply insist that they combat the Taliban and Al Qaeda - we’ve got to help them develop the capability to do so. Our relationship with the army and intelligence agency, unlike our relationship with the nation as a whole, will always have a strong transactional element - but we’ve got to make sure we’re striking a much better bargain.

“**Third**, a ‘democracy dividend’ would empower Pakistan’s moderate mainstream. Ever since the start of the Bush Administration, we’ve had a Musharraf policy rather than a Pakistan policy. The Democracy Dividend will help the secular, democratic, civilian political leaders establish their credibility with the Pakistani public. They must prove that they - more so than the generals or the radical Islamists - can bring real, measurable improvement to the lives of their constituents.

“**Last**, by engaging the Pakistani people, not just their rulers on issues important to them, we are much more likely to secure their support on issues important to us. On a host of topics - Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, Kashmir, the list goes on - Pakistanis want a respectful hearing. Ask an ordinary Pakistani to list the top items of concern about our country, and you may get some answers unrelated to international grand strategy: our visa policy, or textile quotas, or harassment of Muslims in America in their view. Ask any Pakistani about Abu Ghraib. Or Gitmo. Or about waterboarding and torture. Pakistanis don’t see these as mere ‘issues.’ They see these things as a moral stain on the very soul of our nation. And, in my opinion, so should we.

“History may describe today’s Pakistan as a place akin to 1979 Iran or 2001 Afghanistan. The world’s second-largest Muslim nation could become a failed state with an arsenal of nuclear weapons and a population larger than those of Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and North Korea combined. We’re currently far from that point, but it’s a possibility. Or a stable, democratic and secular Pakistan could be a bridge between the West and the global Islamic community. The broad mass of the Pakistani people still want a lasting friendship with America.

“Which future unfolds will be strongly influenced - although certainly not determined - by the actions of the United States. The current transition in Pakistan provides us with an opportunity to make this historic leap to a positive future.

“Today we have two distinguished panels of witnesses: The Administration position will be spelled out by Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher, Principal Deputy Assistant State for Asia and Pacific Affairs Mitchell Shivers, and Deputy Assistant USAID Administrator Mark Ward.

“Our private panel consists of two witnesses with deep on-the-ground experience in Pakistan: Gen. Anthony Zinni served as CENTCOM commander during a period that included Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests, the Kargil conflict, and Musharraf’s coup d’etat. Ambassador Wendy Chamberlin took up her post in Islamabad less than two months before 9/11—and served through a time when nobody knew which direction Pakistan would go. Both Gen. Zinni and Amb. Chamberlin helped prevent the relationship from running adrift in some very dangerous times.

“But we can’t keep jumping from one crisis to the next, relying on exceptional diplomats and military officers to save us from disaster. We need a new strategy, to set the relationship on a stable course.

“I welcome all of our witnesses.”

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