

# Dick Lugar

## U.S. Senator for Indiana

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### Opening Statement for Hearing on Afghanistan

*U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member Dick Lugar made the following statement at today's hearing on Afghanistan.*

I join the Chairman in welcoming Secretary Lew, Ambassador Eikenberry, and General Petraeus. We appreciate very much that you have come to the Foreign Relations Committee today.

This hearing provides an opportunity to build on the hearing we held last week with Secretaries Clinton and Gates and Admiral Mullen. We explored with them not only the prospects for success of the civil-military campaign in Afghanistan, but also how the President's plan fits into our broader strategic objectives of preventing terrorist attacks and stabilizing the Middle East and South Asia.

Much of the debate in Congress has focused on the President's stated intention to begin withdrawing some U.S. troops by July 2011. Some members have voiced the concern that such a date undercuts impressions of U.S. resolve and gives the Taliban and al Qaeda a target beyond which they can wait us out. Other members, with a very different view of the war, worry that the July 2011 date is so flexible that it offers no assurance at all that troops will be withdrawn. This is a legitimate item for debate, but I am doubtful that success or failure hinges on this point nearly as much as it does on the counterinsurgency strategy employed by allied troops, the viability of the Afghan security forces, and most importantly, how the United States engages with Pakistan.

I have confidence that the addition of tens of thousands of U.S. and allied troops, under the direction of Generals Petraeus and McChrystal will improve the security situation on the ground in Afghanistan. More uncertain is whether the training mission will succeed sufficiently to allow U.S. forces to disengage from combat duties in a reasonable time period. The most salient question, however, is whether improvements on the ground in Afghanistan will mean much if Taliban and al Qaeda sanctuaries in Pakistan remain or if instability within Pakistan intensifies.

As hearings in our Committee have underscored, the potential global impact of instability in a nuclear armed Pakistan, dwarfs anything that is likely to happen in Afghanistan. The future direction of governance in Pakistan will have consequences for non-proliferation efforts, global economic stability, our relationships with India and China, and security in both the Middle East and South Asia regions, among other major issues.

Last week, Secretaries Clinton and Gates and Admiral Mullen acknowledged the importance of Pakistan in the President's calculation. They underscored that the Administration is executing a regional strategy. I am encouraged by press reports that have described the intense diplomatic efforts with the Pakistani government aimed at securing much greater cooperation.

But we should remain cognizant that the focus of policy tends to follow resources. By that measure, Afghanistan will still be at the core of our regional effort. The President and his team must justify their plan not only on the basis of how it will affect Afghanistan, but also on how it will impact our efforts to promote a much stronger alliance with Pakistan that embraces vital common objectives.

The President has said that the United States did not choose this war, and he is correct. But with these troop deployments to Afghanistan, we are choosing the battlefield where we will concentrate most of our available military resources. The Afghanistan battlefield has the inherent disadvantage of sitting astride a border with Pakistan that is a porous line for the militants, but a strategic obstacle for coalition forces. As long as this border provides the enemy with an avenue of retreat for resupply and sanctuary, our prospects for destroying or incapacitating the insurgency are negligible.

The risk is that we will expend tens of billions of dollars fighting in a strategically less important Afghanistan, while Taliban and al Qaeda leaders become increasingly secure in Pakistan. If they are able to sit safely across the border directing a hit and run war against us in Afghanistan, plotting catastrophic terrorist attacks abroad, and working to destabilize Pakistan from within, our strategic goals in the region will be threatened despite progress on the ground in Afghanistan.

Some reports indicate that Taliban leaders, aware of the threat from U.S. operated Predator drones, are moving out of remote areas into crowded cities, including Karachi. If such reports are true, the United States will have even fewer options in pursuing Taliban and al Qaeda leaders in Pakistan, absent the active help of Pakistani authorities. Specifically, will Pakistan work with us to eliminate the leadership of Osama bin Laden and other major al Qaeda officials?

In addition to improving the cooperation of the Pakistani authorities, the United States and our allies will have to become more creative in how we engage with the Afghan and Pakistani people. We should understand that as a matter of survival, people in dangerous areas on both sides of the border will tend to side with whoever is seen as having the best chance of winning. We should also recognize that tribal loyalties, most notably Pashtun loyalties, are at odds with a strong central government and with acquiescence to external military power. As Seth Jones of the Rand Corporation has observed: "The objective should be to do what Afghanistan's most effective historical governments have done: help Pashtun tribes, sub-tribes, and clans provide security and justice in their areas and manage the process." Meaningful progress in Afghanistan is likely to require tolerance, or even encouragement, of tribal administration in many areas, as well as convincing tribal leaders that opposing the Taliban is in their interest.

In these circumstances, we should explore how cell phones and other communication technologies can be used more effectively, both as an avenue for public diplomacy to the Afghan people and as a means for gathering intelligence from them. Already, seven million cell phones are in Afghanistan -- one for every four inhabitants. The Taliban's reported priority on destroying communications towers underscores their understanding of the threat posed by these technologies. For example, cell phones could be used by sympathetic Afghans to produce real-time intelligence, including photographs of IEDs being prepared or calls alerting coalition troops to movements of the Taliban. Phones eliminate the need for informants to take the risks of visiting a police station in person or of conversing openly with U.S. troops. Similarly, expanding the use of credit card transactions could prove revolutionary in addressing some vexing problems in a country that lacks an effective banking system. They can provide a way to reduce corruption, improve accounting within the Afghan government and security forces, and relieve soldiers from the need to go AWOL to deliver pay safely to their families.

I appreciate the innovation and dedication that our witnesses have displayed in the past and their willingness to take on extremely difficult missions. I noted last week that the President deserves credit for accepting the responsibility for this difficult problem as we go forward. That is equally true for our distinguished panel. I look forward to our discussion.

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