

REMARKS AS PREPARED

**By Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs
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Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee**

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“A New Strategy for Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan”

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me. I'm pleased to be here with my colleagues from the Department of Defense and from the U.S. Agency for International Development. We three, and others, sit together frequently to discuss the topic you've asked us to talk about here today: U.S. strategy towards Pakistan.

Before delving into substance, I want to first thank the Committee members for their interest, continued engagement and leadership on U.S. policy in Pakistan. The Chairman and Senator Lugar in particular have demonstrated exemplary leadership and bipartisan cooperation in forging a strong, sustained partnership between the United States and Pakistan.

You all know how important Pakistan is to the United States, and I believe you know the reasons why. Pakistan is the second most populous Muslim nation in the world, at the front line in the fight against extremism and terrorism, in a strategically important region, with other important neighbors like Afghanistan, India, Iran and China. The safety and security of the United States is inextricably linked to the success, security, and stability of a democratic Pakistan.

On February 18 of this year, the Pakistani people went to the polls and elected moderate leaders who will set the path for Pakistan into the future. We want to see this new government succeed, because it represents the desires of the Pakistani people and because we believe that a moderate government with a democratic mandate is the most effective partner in the fight against terrorists and violent extremism.

The successful elections earlier this year were an important moment for Pakistan and its democratic development, but a number of difficult challenges remain for the new civilian government, from facing down extremism to stimulating economic growth and dealing with energy and food shortages. Our support in these

efforts is critical to the success and stability of Pakistan as a nation. Therefore we will continue to pursue a long-term, comprehensive partnership with Pakistan that seeks to address their most important needs and strengthens our relationship as democratic allies and partners.

The new government is at the core of our strategy for working with Pakistan. We want to help the new leaders modernize the nation in all its aspects. Modernize democratic institutions. Modernize an economy that can provide jobs to its citizens. Modernize the education system. Modernize the security services so that they can effectively fight terrorists. And, bring the arrangements for the Tribal Areas up to date so that the writ of government prevails throughout the nation. With the new Pakistani government, we are already working to do these things that we hope can strengthen democratic, civilian institutions, promote good governance, enhance counterterrorism cooperation and that we hope can eliminate the social and economic conditions that allow extremism to flourish.

Over the past year, we in the U.S. Government have been developing a strategy intended to reinforce our existing commitment to the kind of long-term partnership I just described. This strategy addresses Pakistan's needs in education, strengthened democratic institutions, economic growth and adequate healthcare. We are pleased that Senator Biden is proposing just such a commitment in new legislation. While we do not agree on every point in the current version of the proposed legislation, we welcome this initiative and feel strongly that a new, bipartisan commitment to partnership with Pakistan is crucial. We look forward to working closely with this Committee to see this initiative through.

A sustained and integrated commitment to developing Pakistan's economy and social infrastructure cannot be separated from our key strategic objectives there in the war on terror. There are a number of important initiatives in this vein, but I would particularly like to highlight one: Reconstruction Opportunity Zones. Certain goods produced in zones in the border and earthquake-affected areas of Pakistan (and all of Afghanistan) would be eligible for duty-free treatment on entry into the United States. These zones will help to counter extremism by stimulating sustainable development and provide alternatives to extremism, narcotics trafficking, and other illicit activities. Reconstruction Opportunity Zone legislation is expected to be introduced in the House of Representatives very shortly and I hope we will have your support for the Cantwell bill in the Senate.

I will be traveling to Pakistan next week to talk with the new government about how we can best face the challenges ahead together. My messages will be

simple and consistently delivered to political, military and civil society leaders. I intend to say clearly: The United States welcomes and supports the democratically-elected government of Pakistan. We believe firmly that now is the time for everyone to get past political maneuvering and focus on the issues that are important for the Pakistani people. We will work with you to support the modernization of Pakistan in all areas. We will work with you to support local leadership and oppose militants, because terrorism is our common enemy. And, we will work together to determine how we can focus our assistance in the areas that matter most to the people of Pakistan.

Looking ahead, for our commitment to Pakistan to be successful, it must be a long-term partnership and it must be based upon a bipartisan consensus. We hope that together, Congress and the Administration can establish a new framework for economic and security assistance that can support Pakistan's democracy, counter its terrorism threats, and strengthen its development.

Thank you and I'd be happy to take your questions.

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