

**SECRETARY OF STATE HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE
WASHINGTON, DC
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Chairman Kerry, Senator Lugar, and members of the Committee, I'm grateful for this opportunity to testify before so many good friends. Many of you have been personally involved in our efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan. And I want to thank the Committee for the constructive role it has played in addressing the challenges we face in this region of the world.

On Tuesday, President Obama presented the Administration's strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan. Today, Secretary Gates, Admiral Mullen, and I will all be providing you with additional details. But let me speak briefly at a more personal level about why we are making this commitment.

Simply put, among a range of difficult choices, this is the best way to protect our nation now and in the future.

The extremists we are fighting in Afghanistan and Pakistan have attacked us and our allies before. If we allow them access to the very same safe havens they used before 2001, they will have a greater capacity to regroup and attack again. They could drag an entire region into chaos. Our civilian and military leaders in Afghanistan have reported that the situation is serious and worsening. We agree.

In the aftermath of September 11th, I grieved with sons, daughters, husbands, and wives whose loved ones were murdered. It was an attack on our country, but it was also an attack on my constituents. I witnessed the tragic consequences in the lives of thousands of innocent families,

and the damage done to our economy and our sense of security. So I feel a personal responsibility to help protect our nation from such violence.

THE MISSION

The case for action against al Qaeda and its allies has always been clear, but the United States' course of action over the last eight years has not. The fog of another war obscured our focus. And while our attention was focused elsewhere, the Taliban gained momentum in Afghanistan. And the extremist threat grew in Pakistan – a country with 175 million people, a nuclear arsenal, and more than its share of challenges.

It was against this backdrop that the President called for a careful, thorough review of our strategy. I was proud to be a part of that process. And our objectives are clear:

- We will work with the Afghan and Pakistani governments to eliminate safe havens for those plotting attacks against us, our allies, and our interests;
- We will help to stabilize a region that is fundamental to our national security; and
- We will develop a long-term, sustainable relationship with Afghanistan and Pakistan so that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past. The duration of our military presence will be limited, but our civilian commitment must continue even as our troops begin to come home.

Accomplishing this mission and ensuring the safety of the American people will not be easy. It will mean sending more civilians, troops, and assistance to Afghanistan, and significantly expanding our civilian efforts in Pakistan.

The men and women carrying out this mission are not statistics on a PowerPoint slide. They are our friends and neighbors, our sons and daughters, our brothers and sisters. We will be asking them – and the American people who support them – to make extraordinary sacrifices on behalf of our security. I want to assure the Committee that we will do everything we can to ensure their sacrifices make our nation safer.

THE METHODS

The situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan is serious, but it is not, in my view, as negative as frequently portrayed in public. And the beginning of President Karzai's second term has opened a new window of opportunity. We have real concerns about the influence of corrupt officials in the Afghan government, and we will continue to pursue them. But in his inauguration speech last month, I witnessed President Karzai call for a new compact with the Afghan people and the international community. He pledged to combat corruption, improve governance, and deliver for the people of his country. His words were long in coming, but welcome. They must now be matched with action. The Afghan people, the United States, and the international community will hold the Afghan government accountable for making good on these commitments.

We will help by working with our Afghan partners to strengthen institutions at every level of Afghan society so that we don't leave chaos behind when our combat troops begin to depart.

The President has outlined a timeframe for transition to Afghan responsibility. As he said in his speech Tuesday, the additional American and international troops will allow us to accelerate handing over responsibility to Afghan forces and allow us to begin the transfer of our forces out of Afghanistan in July of 2011. Just as we have done in Iraq, we will execute this transition responsibly, taking into account conditions on the ground.

A timeframe for transition will provide a sense of urgency in working with the Afghan government. But it should be clear to everyone that – unlike the past – the United States and our allies and partners will have an enduring commitment to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the region. Our resolve in this fight is reflected in the substantial commitment of troops since the President took office and in the significant civilian commitment that will continue long after our combat forces begin to leave.

That civilian effort is already bearing fruit. Civilian experts and advisors are helping to craft policy inside government ministries, providing development assistance in the field, and working in scores of other roles. When our Marines went into Nawa this July, we had civilians on the ground with them to coordinate assistance the next day. And as operations progress, our civ-mil coordination is growing even stronger.

We are on track to triple the number of civilian positions in Afghanistan to 974 by early next year. On average, each of these civilians leverages 10 partners, ranging from locally employed staff to experts with U.S.-funded NGOs. It's cliché to say that we have our best people in these jobs, but it also happens to be true. When I was in Kabul a few weeks ago, I met with an American colonel who told me that while he had thousands of outstanding soldiers under his command, none of them had the 40 years of agricultural experience of the USDA civilian serving alongside his battalion, or the rule of law and governance expertise of their civilian specialists from the State Department. He told me: "I am happy to supply whatever support these valuable civilians need. And we need more of them." The President's strategy will make that possible.

Not only do we have the right people to achieve our objectives, we also have a sound strategy. We will be delivering high-impact economic assistance and bolstering Afghanistan's agricultural sector – the traditional core of the Afghan economy. This will create jobs, reduce

the funding that the Taliban receives from poppy cultivation, and draw insurgents off of the battlefield.

We will also support an Afghan-led effort to open the door to those Taliban who abandon violence and want to reintegrate into Afghan society. We understand that some of those who fight with the insurgency do so not out of conviction, but due to coercion or money. All Afghans should have the choice to pursue a better future if they do so peacefully, respect the basic human rights of their fellow citizens, and renounce al Qaeda.

Our regional diplomacy complements this political approach, by seeking to mitigate external interference in Afghanistan and working to shift the calculus of neighboring countries from competition for influence to cooperation and economic integration.

We also believe that a strong, stable, democratic Pakistan must be a key partner for the United States, and an ally in the fight against violent extremism. People in Pakistan are increasingly coming to the view that we share a common enemy. I heard this repeatedly during my recent visit. Our relationship is anchored in our common goals of civilian rule; robust economic development; and the defeat of those who threaten Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the peace of the world.

We will significantly expand support intended to help develop the potential of Pakistan and its people. Our assistance will demonstrate the United States' commitment to addressing problems that affect the everyday lives of Pakistanis and bring our people closer together. But it will also bolster Pakistan against the threat of extremism. A village where girls have had the opportunity to get an education will be more resistant to Al Qaeda and the Taliban. And a young man with a bright future in a growing economy is less likely to waste his potential in a suicide bombing. It was extremely important to have the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act – sponsored by Chairman Kerry, Senator Lugar, and Chairman Berman – pass with bipartisan and bicameral

support. We will seek full funding from Congress, and I believe this legislation will play a critical role in helping us transform our partnership with Pakistan.

We will not be facing these challenges alone. We share this responsibility with governments around the world. Our NATO allies have already made significant contributions of their own in Afghanistan, and this afternoon I will leave for Brussels to begin the process of securing additional Alliance commitments of troops, trainers, and resources. Ambassador Holbrooke, our Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, is already there consulting with our allies.

The international community is also expanding its support to Pakistan, and we are in close touch with partners to coordinate assistance. We are also looking beyond NATO to build the broadest possible global coalition to meet this challenge. Our objectives are shared by people and governments from Europe to Australia, from Russia to China to India, and across the Middle East. And we are reaching out to Muslims everywhere to make it clear that the United States seeks to build a better future with them in a spirit of mutual respect and partnership.

THE MESSAGE

Let me conclude where I began. We face a range of difficult choices in Afghanistan and Pakistan. But the President's plan represents the best way we know to protect our nation today and in the future. The task we face is as complex as any national security challenge in our lifetimes. We will not succeed if people view this effort as the responsibility of a single party, a single agency within our government, or a single country. We owe it to the troops and civilians who will face these dangers to come together as Americans – and come together with our allies and international partners – to help them accomplish this mission. I look forward to working with you to meet this challenge. And I thank you for the opportunity to testify today.