

by Lisa Curtis
Testimony before the United States Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information, Federal Services, and International Security
Delivered on July 7, 2009
My name is Lisa Curtis. I am a senior research fellow at The Heritage Foundation. The views I express in this testimony are my own, and should not be construed as representing any official position of The Heritage Foundation.

Containing the global terrorist threat in South Asia will depend largely on the ability of the United States to forge a trusting and cooperative partnership with Pakistan over the next several years. The future direction of the region, including the outcome of the war in Afghanistan, pivots on Pakistan's ability to overcome multiple socio-economic challenges as well as its willingness to fight terrorism in all its forms within its own borders. My testimony will address recent developments in the region and make recommendations for U.S. policy over the next eighteen months. My remarks will focus on developments in both Pakistan and Afghanistan, where I traveled from June 21-28 as part of a NATO-sponsored Transatlantic Opinion Leaders delegation.

Pakistani Offensives in Swat and Waziristan
There has been a significant change in the Pakistan military's attitude toward confronting the Pakistani Taliban in the northwest part of the country in the past ten weeks. Just one week after Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari approved the Swat Valley peace agreement following passage of a parliamentary resolution urging him to do so, the Taliban took over the neighboring district of Buner in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) in mid-April. On April 24, under both Pakistani public and U.S. pressure, the Pakistan Army deployed paramilitary troops to the region and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Ashfaq Kayani sent a warning to the militants that the Army would not allow them to "impose their way of life on the civil society of Pakistan." The statement was a positive first step in clarifying Pakistani policy toward the militants and was followed by aggressive military operations that have ousted the Taliban from the Swat Valley. The Pakistan government says its military has killed more than 1,600 militants in the past eight weeks in the Swat operation.

The fighting also has led to a severe humanitarian crisis with nearly three million people fleeing their homes, the largest such human exodus since the country's founding in 1947. The U.S. has provided substantially more aid than other nations to help relieve the refugee crisis (about \$300 million so far), but the United Nations has declared it is still far short of the funds it needs to address the crisis. The internally displaced are facing health threats as there is a severe strain on medical facilities and health services, according to the World Health Organization.

The Pakistan Army also appears set to begin an offensive in the tribal areas in South Waziristan, where insurgent forces of Pakistani Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud reside and possibly even North Waziristan, where the forces of Afghan terrorist leader Jalaluddin Haqqani have found safe haven. Baitullah Mehsud is an ally of both al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban but has focused his attention more recently on targeting the Pakistani state through a spate of suicide bombings. Mehsud has also been linked to the assassination of former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

Jalaluddin Haqqani is a powerful independent militant leader who operates in the border areas between Khost province in Afghanistan and North Waziristan. He has been allied with the Afghan Taliban for nearly 15 years, having served as tribal affairs minister in the Taliban regime in the late 1990s. The Haqqani network has reportedly been behind several high-profile attacks in Afghanistan, including a truck bombing that killed two U.S. soldiers in Khost province in March 2008 and the storming of the Serena Hotel in Kabul during a high-level visit by Norwegian officials in January 2008. Credible media reports, quoting U.S. officials, further reveal a

Pakistani intelligence link to the Haqqani network's planning and execution of a suicide bomb attack against India's embassy in Kabul last July that left over 50 Afghan civilians and two senior Indian officials dead. The fact that both anti-Pakistan and pro-Pakistan militants reside in the tribal areas highlights the complexities of partnering effectively with Pakistan to defeat the terrorists as well as the fluidity of the situation as Pakistani leaders increasingly recognize the gravity of the threat posed by the various terrorist groups to the stability of the Pakistani state. The U.S. also has stepped up its drone missile strikes in the region in the last two weeks, apparently with the support of Pakistani intelligence. More than 60 were killed in a drone strike in South Waziristan two weeks ago that apparently missed Baitullah Mehsud by a matter of hours. Pakistani jets last week bombed suspected militant hideouts in North Waziristan, where militants had killed at least 30 Pakistani soldiers in an ambush on an army convoy the week before. During my recent visit to Afghanistan, several NATO commanders expressed the view that Pakistani military operations in the tribal areas are beginning to pay dividends in terms of reducing the flow of militants and weapons into Afghanistan. This demonstrates that a strategy of coaxing the Pakistanis to do more against the terrorist threat in the tribal areas while continuing to support the country through economic and military assistance may be working. Despite its frustration with the continued existence of the terrorist safe haven in Pakistan's tribal areas, the Obama Administration has operated on the assumption that the Pakistani military would awaken to the dangers the terrorists pose to Pakistani society. Unfortunately, past links between extremists and elements of the Pakistani security establishment have led to confusion about the genuine threat to the nation. In turn, this ambivalence towards extremist groups has fueled conspiracy theories against outsiders (mainly India or the U.S.) that have been aired in the Pakistani media and led to a public discourse that diminished the threat from terrorism. A recent combination of events, including the Taliban declaring democracy in Pakistan as "infidel," has begun to change the Pakistani public's attitude toward the Taliban and given the Army the public support it requires to fight them militarily. COAS General Kayani said last Friday that, "While external threats continue to exist, it is the internal threat to Pakistan that needs immediate attention." The U.S. must focus on helping sustain the Pakistani momentum against the Taliban by supporting them through military assistance as well as generous economic and humanitarian aid that helps resettle and rebuild the lives of those civilians displaced by the fighting. Afghanistan I would like to address the situation in Afghanistan and share some observations from my June 21-28 trip there as part of a NATO-sponsored experts delegation. During the trip, we met with senior NATO, U.N., and Afghan officials and visited the Kabul Military Training Center (KMTC), the Counterinsurgency School outside Kabul, as well as Regional Command-South in Kandahar and Regional Command-West in Herat. International Coordination: There are signs of improvement in the coordination of the multinational effort in Afghanistan. The NATO partners welcome the U.S. "comprehensive and integrated" approach introduced by U.S. President Barack Obama on March 27. New Commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan General Stanley McChrystal recently elaborated on this approach by describing the major goal of the Afghanistan mission as "protection of the people, rather than defeat of the insurgents." According to NATO commanders on the ground, there is greater focus on local patrolling, engaging with the population, and conducting humanitarian operations. The new formulation of the strategy has struck the right chord with the other NATO and troop-contributing nations. It is important to remember that the mission in Afghanistan is truly an international endeavor. The

U.S. is providing the bulk of the fighting forces, but several other countries, especially the United Kingdom, Canada, and the Netherlands, also are making invaluable contributions to the military operations while others support aspects of the campaign like police training, election monitoring, and institution building. The NATO partners recognize the stakes for the international community in stabilizing Afghanistan and we should not allow differences over tactics in achieving this mission to divide us politically. In other words, our common strategic goals for the region far outstrip any differences we may share over short-term tactics.

The leading international players in Afghanistan (U.S., NATO ISAF, U.N., and E.U.) are focusing on harmonizing their efforts and getting down to the brass tacks of improving governance, building state institutions, and developing the economy. NATO priorities include support for free and transparent elections, training and mentoring the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP), and regional engagement. NATO commanders on the ground highlighted the fact that the ANA is now in many cases leading military operations--something it could not do just three years ago. NATO leaders also expressed their commitment to a policy of working closely with the Afghan government and U.N. to ensure that areas cleared of militants will immediately receive development and reconstruction assistance and the institution of Afghan government authority.

The functioning of the Joint Coordination Mechanism Board (JCMB), chaired by the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the Afghan government, has helped improve the international coordination process. In the past, several different countries and organizations spoke separately with the Afghan government, leading to significant confusion about development priorities and progress and hindering the achievement of our overall objectives in the country. The JCMB has begun to rectify this problem. For example, the JCMB is currently involved in helping organize the planned civilian surge aimed at bolstering the Afghan government ministries. One U.N. official explained how Afghan ministers came up with a solid, comprehensive plan for the civilian surge on their own, which was conveyed to NATO ISAF through the U.N. This kind of close and centralized interaction between the international community and the Afghan government is essential to enabling and empowering Afghan leaders to take the lead in stabilizing and securing their country.

Elections: It is imperative that the August 20 elections are carried out in a credible manner and that the Afghan people believe the democratic process can bring change to their everyday lives. It would be devastating if just as the international community is getting its act together and implementing a winning strategy, the Afghan people lose faith in the democratic process because of a flawed election. There is more apathy toward this election than the 2004 elections because many Afghans believe the Karzai administration will use government machinery to rig the election, thus rendering their vote worthless. If people believe the elections were manipulated and unreflective of voters' wishes, this could serve a major blow to our overall goals in Afghanistan.

At the same time, since this is the first Afghan-led election, the Afghans are taking ownership of the process and do not view it as something imposed on them by the West. Voter registration went better than expected, with new voters registering in all but about ten districts (the so-called black districts that are under Taliban control). U.N. officials acknowledge the elections will not be perfect, however, and they are worried about issues such as underage and multiple voting. There are critical checks on the process like the use of indelible ink on voters' fingers and counting ballots at the polling stations with results posted immediately afterwards. To deal with the security concerns, an additional 10,000 police will be deployed throughout the country in the coming weeks.

Security Situation in Southern Afghanistan: There has been about a 60 percent increase in attacks this

year in Afghanistan with approximately 80 percent of those attacks occurring in a handful of districts in the southern part of the country. The new push by U.S. forces into Helmand Province is part of a broader effort to regain the initiative from the Taliban in the south. The idea is to clear insurgents from "black districts" that are now under Taliban sway and bring in development and reconstruction aid and re-establish government authority. The timing of the operation is critical as it comes six weeks before the national elections. It is necessary for the coalition forces to access these insurgent-infested areas and disrupt the insurgents' ability to entrench themselves deeper into these spaces.

The NATO commanders I met with two weeks ago in Regional Command-South in Kandahar were enthusiastic about the arrival of the additional 17,000 U.S. troops to southern Afghanistan. These commanders noted they had a sound strategy to counter the insurgency but up until now had lacked sufficient resources to implement their strategy. "For the first time RC-South will be given the resources it needs to move forward," commented one senior commander. The new forces will allow them to gain greater situational awareness and hold more territory, which will inspire more confidence among the population that the coalition forces can protect them. They believe the U.S. troop influx will help shift the momentum against the Taliban, perhaps as early as late summer or early fall.

Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations

The challenges in Afghanistan are linked to Pakistan but the complexity of the Afghanistan-Pakistan relationship, the constantly evolving tactics of the insurgency, and the insurgents' ability to slip with ease between borders make policy solutions difficult. Most interlocutors conveyed that relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan were growing stronger and had improved from a year ago, although some high-level Afghan officials said the cooperation was occurring only at a surface level and that Pakistan still supported the Afghan Taliban. Some interlocutors claimed that Pakistan's intelligence service provides the strategic organization and operational support for the Afghan Taliban, while Middle Eastern financiers provide the bulk of financial resources.

NATO leaders reported that coordination with Pakistan along the eastern border had improved over the last year, which was beginning to impact positively on the eastern sector of Afghanistan. Tripartite intelligence sharing among Pakistani, Afghan, and NATO ISAF officials has been improving. A Border Coordination Center (BCC) staffed by Afghan, Pakistani, and NATO ISAF personnel has been established at Torkham Gate in the Khyber Pass and a second BCC is currently under construction at Spin Boldak.

Still, NATO commanders said Pakistan was a "significant enabler" for the insurgency in Afghanistan. The command and control of the Afghan Taliban resides in and around Quetta, Baluchistan, and provides leadership and access to money flows for the insurgent operations in Afghanistan. Interlocutors staffing Regional Command-South told our delegation that if the Taliban leadership in Quetta was neutralized, this would constitute a significant blow to the insurgency in southern Afghanistan, depriving it of guidance, focus, and legitimacy.

One of the major problems in garnering full Pakistani cooperation against the Afghan Taliban is the continued paranoia about India's role in Afghanistan that pervades the Pakistani security establishment. New York Times correspondent David Sanger's recently released book, *The Inheritance: The World Obama Confronts and the Challenges to American Power*, provides insight into the depth of suspicion in Pakistani military circles about Indian activities in Afghanistan. Sanger says that Indian development activities the U.S. views as helpful such as road and dam construction and provision of humanitarian aid, are seen by the Pakistanis as Indian attempts to encircle Pakistan with the ultimate goal of invading and dominating Pakistan. In Sanger's account, a Pakistani General describes to a U.S. official why Pakistan must maintain relations with the Afghan Taliban. He explains that eventually the

coalition forces will pull out of Afghanistan and thus it will be necessary for Pakistan to have good relations with the opposition in Afghanistan (i.e., the Afghan Taliban). Sanger asserts that the Pakistan Army regularly gave the Taliban and other militant groups "weapons and support to go into Afghanistan to attack Afghan and coalition forces."

We must convince Pakistan to crack down on the Afghan Taliban leadership within its own borders in order to achieve our goals vis-à-vis Afghanistan. The U.S. must measure Pakistan's efforts against the Afghan Taliban leadership as a metric for determining how much and what kind of U.S. military assistance Pakistan should receive. When the U.S. government possesses information that indicates Pakistan is supporting terrorist elements, the U.S. must ensure Pakistan experiences negative consequences for such support.

Pakistan-India Relations

While Washington policymakers must seek to address Pakistani concerns vis-à-vis India, they also must recognize that this is an uphill task, given the historical animosity between the South Asian rivals that has existed since their independence from the British over 60 years ago and which has resulted in three all-out wars, the nuclearization of the Subcontinent, a brief border war in 1999, and a major military build-up in 2001-2002.

The recent meeting between Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari on June 16 on the fringes of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization gathering provided an opportunity for India to set parameters for any future dialogue. Prime Minister Singh demonstrated his interest in moving talks forward by agreeing to meet with the Pakistani leader just one month after his party's re-election to another five-year term of office. But his statement to Zardari in the media glare that "My mandate is to tell you that Pakistani territory should not be used for terrorism against India," sent a strong message that the November 2008 Mumbai attacks will continue to color the tone of talks until Islamabad demonstrates firmer action against the Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT), the Pakistan-based terrorist group behind the Mumbai rampage.

Singh's statement came two weeks after a Pakistani court freed LeT leader Hafiz Muhammed Sayeed from prison on June 2 under the contention that it did not have enough evidence to continue his detention. This past weekend the Pakistani government filed a petition in the Supreme Court of Pakistan to challenge the release of Sayeed. In a related development, an anti-terror court in Pakistan last week apparently adjourned hearings until July 18 in the case against five LeT members (Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, Zarar Shah, Abu al-Qama, Shahid Jamil Riaz, and Hamad Amin Sadiq) who were arrested by the Pakistani authorities in connection with the Mumbai terror strikes. New Delhi will watch carefully how the Pakistan government handles the cases against the perpetrators of the Mumbai terror attacks as it decides how to move forward with talks with Islamabad. The Indian and Pakistani foreign secretaries have tentatively agreed to meet in Sharm-el-Sheikh, Egypt, on the fringes of a Nonaligned Movement (NAM) summit on July 14.

An incident over the weekend along the Indo-Pakistani border highlights the need for regular and consistent communication between the two countries. Pakistan-based militants fired rockets into an Indian village in the state of Punjab close to the international border. This is the first such incident of a rocket firing across the border and raises fresh worries that militants based in Pakistan can provoke broader Indo-Pakistani conflict.

Congressional Action

Support Afghanistan Civilian Surge. The idea of increasing the number of civilian specialists within Afghan ministries to build government capacity and speed up development and reconstruction is widely favored by the Afghan people. The U.S. Congress should work closely with the Administration to provide the appropriate authorities for deploying civilian specialists as soon as possible.

Focus on Building up Afghan Security Forces. President Obama's commitment to build up the ANA to a strength of 134,000 is

not enough. Investing more resources into expanding the ANA now will speed the process of Afghanistan assuming responsibility for its own security and save future investment of U.S. blood and treasure into the country.

Support a greater role for Pakistan in the reconstruction of Afghanistan in exchange for Islamabad cracking down on the Afghan Taliban leadership on its territory. Leaders in both Pakistan and Afghanistan have demonstrated they are capable of developing a new vision of Afghan-Pakistani relations based on increased trade and economic interaction. For instance, one Afghan interlocutor called for construction of a road between Gwadar Port in Baluchistan, Pakistan, and Kandahar City in Afghanistan as a way to spur trade activity in the region. The U.S. should make clear to Pakistani leaders, however, that stronger efforts to crack down on the Afghan Taliban leadership on Pakistani territory will be a prerequisite for Pakistan receiving a larger hand in reconstruction projects inside Afghanistan. U.S. policymakers should make clear to Pakistan that a dual policy of supporting some terrorists while fighting others is no longer sustainable if Pakistan wants to survive as a stable nation-state engaged with the rest of the world community.

Provide Aid and Monitor IDP Situation. The U.S. has already provided significant humanitarian aid for the Pakistanis that have been displaced by the fighting in Swat Valley but policymakers must continue to monitor the situation and ensure the Taliban does not use the plight of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) as a recruiting tool. There have been reports that the LeT has been assisting IDPs through a front organization, the Falah-i-Insaniat Foundation, and reportedly has sent 2,000 workers to provide aid and transport to IDPs in three different camps. The U.S. should insist on Pakistani restrictions on extremist groups aiding the IDPs.

Support Pakistan in Developing Hold and Build Strategy for the Tribal Areas. In the past, Pakistani military operations in the tribal areas have failed to stabilize the region or bring in greater government control. The U.S. must encourage Pakistan to implement hold and build strategies following military operations that establish government writ in the region and eventually bring reform that incorporates the areas into the larger Pakistani political framework. The U.S. should quietly encourage Pakistani leaders to develop a comprehensive plan of action to counter extremist trends in the country. Such a plan would require Pakistan's federal and provincial civilian leaders and the army to work in tandem, reinforcing the tactics and strategies of one another. Pakistani government resources will be stretched in the coming months as the military seeks to stabilize the Swat Valley and squeeze militants in the tribal areas. The U.S. will need to exercise patience with Pakistani efforts and not expect the situation in the tribal areas to be under full control for several years.

Dissuade Pakistan from Striking New Peace Deals with Militants. The Pakistan military will likely feel compelled to strike peace deals with militants, especially if fighting in the tribal areas drags on or if the tempo of revenge suicide attacks increases. Washington should seek to convince Pakistani leaders that past peace deals have only undermined their position strategically and must be avoided at all costs.

Prioritize Pakistan Aid and ROZ Legislation. The two separate pieces of Pakistan legislation that have passed the House and Senate (the Pakistan Enduring Assistance and Cooperation Enhancement Act and the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act, respectively) should be reconciled in an expeditious manner so that the U.S. can demonstrate its commitment to a long-term partnership with the country at a time when it is battling Taliban advances. Initiatives like the Afghanistan and Pakistan Reconstruction Opportunity Zones Act (ROZ) that would provide U.S. duty-free access to items produced in industrial zones in the border areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan would also help the South Asia nations experience the benefits of regional cooperation. The ROZ legislation will contribute to changing security perceptions in the

region, turning Afghanistan and Pakistan away from zero-sum geopolitical calculations that fuel religious extremism and terrorism and toward a focus on enhancing cooperation and regional integration.

Dedicate More Resources to Strategic Communications. The U.S. Congress should support efforts to improve both U.S. and NATO strategic messaging campaigns in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The U.S. and NATO need to be more pro-active and strategic in how they message the Afghan public, instead of merely reacting to events. Although it is critical to react with the truth, and it can take time to discern the facts of an incident (as in the recent air strikes in Farah Province that resulted in several Afghan civilian casualties), the coalition forces need to be ready with interim responses to address rapidly developing events. The U.S. also needs to increase its awareness of the impact of its public messages on both the insurgents as well as the Afghan population. U.S. public statements that there is a limited time period (one to two years) to turn the situation in Afghanistan around have been counterproductive and provide encouragement for the enemy. The enemy's goal is to weaken the will of the international community and statements like the above allow insurgent leaders to convince their cadre that they are succeeding.

Encourage Indo-Pakistani Rapprochement but Tread Carefully on Kashmir. The U.S. must be sensitive to the depth of India-Pakistan rivalry and tread carefully when it comes to the intractable Kashmir dispute. The U.S. must not fall into the trap of pushing for a resumption of official Indo-Pakistani talks as an end in itself but instead encourage changes in the dynamics of the Indo-Pakistani relationship that will reduce tensions and uproot terrorism from the region. Indian insistence that Pakistan shut down the LeT was a reasonable demand even before the Mumbai attacks and has now become essential to reducing the chances of additional acts of terrorism that could lead to conflict between the two nuclear-armed nations. Pushing for a resumption of Indo-Pakistani peace talks without concerted action against the perpetrators of the Mumbai attacks could well embolden groups like LeT to up the ante.

Rather than repeating vague U.S. policy formations like "any solution must take into account the will of the Kashmiri people," that do little to build peace in the region and risk raising false expectations about the potential for U.S. mediation, the U.S. should quietly encourage Indian and Pakistani officials to develop a different security paradigm for the region. This new paradigm would allow them to focus on containing dangerous non-state actors that threaten stability in both countries. The first step of realizing this new security paradigm is for Pakistan to demonstrate that it will no longer tolerate the export of terrorism from its territory.

If Pakistan takes decisive action to close down the LeT, India and Pakistan could pick up the threads of the dialogue they conducted from 2004 to 2007. Through this dialogue, the two sides strengthened mutual confidence by increasing people-to-people exchanges, augmenting annual bilateral trade to over \$1 billion, launching several cross-border bus and train services, and liberalizing visa regimes to encourage travel between the two countries. There was even progress on the vexing Kashmir issue with the two governments narrowing the gap in their rhetoric about an ultimate solution to Kashmir. Both sides referenced the idea of keeping the current boundaries intact and making the Line of Control (LOC) that divides Kashmir irrelevant and instituting some type of joint mechanism to facilitate cooperation between the Pakistani and Indian parts of Kashmir.

Conclusion

Pakistan is at a critical juncture. The Obama Administration is demonstrating a willingness to invest significant resources (even amid a serious global economic downturn) into helping the country develop into a prosperous, peaceful, and thriving state. But achieving this goal requires Pakistani leaders to adjust their own regional security perceptions and to view the internal terrorist threat as urgently as their counterparts in

Washington do. Only through a strong and trusting U.S.-Pakistan partnership can Pakistan stabilize its economy and face down extremists who wish to destroy its tolerant traditions, retard its growth and development, and isolate the country from the global community.

Lisa Curtis is Senior Research Fellow for South Asia in the Asian Studies Center at The Heritage Foundation.

Copyright 2009 The Heritage Foundation. www.heritage.org
Reproduced with permission. All rights reserved.</p>