

Chairman Russ Carnahan  
Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight

Opening Statement  
“Afghanistan Reconstruction Oversight”

May 20, 2010

On Tuesday morning, we marked a solemn occasion when a car bomb intercepted a U.S. convoy and five U.S. soldiers died. The toll of American casualties in Afghanistan passed 1,000. We must now redouble our efforts to effectively utilize resources and build up Afghan forces so that our brave American troops can ultimately come home.

From May 1- May 3, I traveled to Kabul, Kandahar, and Islamabad as part of a House Foreign Affairs Committee trip to review security and reconstruction efforts underway in Afghanistan and Pakistan. I met with General Stanley McChrystal, the top U.S. and NATO commander in Afghanistan, Afghan President Hamid Karzai, along with American troops who are working to help the Afghan people rebuild their nation after years of Taliban control.

While I was away, we were threatened on U.S. soil once again. The Times Square bomb plot reminded us all of the urgency and importance of our success in Afghanistan and Pakistan. We must do everything in our power at home and abroad to keep our citizens safe.

On February 24, I convened my first hearing as Chair of this subcommittee on “Hard Lessons Learned in Iraq and Benchmarks for Future Reconstruction Efforts” with Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction Stuart Bowen. Mr. Bowen conveyed a series of hard lessons:

-Mr. Bowen estimated that \$4 billion in waste has occurred during the Iraq program because of weak planning, repeated shifts in program direction, and poor management oversight.

-Mr. Bowen highlighted a lack of contract oversight to protect our taxpayer dollars. In one striking example, a \$2.5 billion police training contract, the largest ever in the State Department’s history, was being managed by only three contract officer representatives.

-Mr. Bowen described an “adhocracy” with blurred chains of command between DOD, State, and USAID. He emphasized the lack of an institutional structure and human resources to effectively perform stabilization and reconstruction operations.

Today, I want to ask Major General Arnold Fields, Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, a simple question that has profound implications for protecting our citizens and safeguarding our taxpayer dollars: *“Have we learned our lessons?”*

Last December, President Obama announced that 30,000 additional troops would be sent to Afghanistan. To accompany the troop increase, the State Department announced that it will immediately triple the number of civilian experts and advisors. President Obama’s new funding requests would bring U.S. support for the reconstruction of Afghanistan to \$71 billion, far surpassing

what the United States provided to rebuild Europe after World War II and significantly more than it has spent in Iraq over the last eight years.

We need to ensure that these civilian resources are being spent effectively and that waste, fraud, and abuse are being rooted out.

The Government Accountability Office estimates that, as of early 2010, approximately 107,000 contractors support U.S. and allied efforts in Afghanistan. Last month, General McChrystal questioned our reliance on private contractors, and said “I actually think we would be better to reduce the number of contractors involved.” He said, “I think it doesn’t save money,” and “We have created in ourselves a dependency on contractors that I think is greater than it ought to be.” We need to reduce our dependence on private contractors, and ensure that there is adequate oversight and contract management in place so that taxpayer dollars are not wasted.

In order to protect taxpayer resources, we must also strengthen efforts to combat corruption. A recent UN survey estimates that Afghans paid \$2.5 billion in bribes to their government officials and members of the police force in 2009. In 2009, Afghanistan was ranked 179 out of 180 on Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index—a steep drop from 117 out of 159 in 2005. These are alarming statistics. The United States and other donors have pledged to increase the proportion of development aid delivered through the Afghan government to 50 percent in the next two years. If we are going to work in partnership with the Afghan government, we must ensure that they are a reliable partner that weeds out corruption.

While we fight waste and corruption, we must also build Afghanistan’s capacity to provide for its own security by training and equipping the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). Current requirements call for the Afghan National Army to grow from 103,475 as of June 2009 to 171,600 by October 2011. The Afghan National Police will be boosted from about 94,000 to 134,000. We must ensure that we are measuring not just the number of troops and police being trained, but their effectiveness in protecting Afghan civilians.

We must also develop Afghanistan’s economy. According to the United Nations, about 80 percent of Afghanistan’s population lives in rural areas. We must do more to promote alternative development, build the Afghan agricultural sector, and reduce the production of opium. The Missouri National Guard Agricultural Development Team is deployed to Nangarhar Province, and is doing excellent work to pair troops with a civilian background in framing with Afghan farmers to teach them sustainable farming practices and techniques.

As we train the Afghan National Security Forces and develop the Afghan economy, we must focus on women, who make up 60 percent of the Afghan population. Under the Taliban’s rule in Afghanistan, women were subjected to harsh inequalities and were excluded from all forms of public life. Last week, I moderated a roundtable with female Ministers from the Afghan government to discuss how the U.S. and Afghanistan can work together to empower women politically, economically, and socially.

I look forward to hearing testimony today in all of these critical areas from Major General Fields. We have a responsibility to our men and women in uniform and to the taxpayers of this country to make sure that we have a strict accounting of how resources are being spent. We cannot waste resources that our troops need to keep themselves safe and get the job done.

I will now recognize our Ranking Member, Representative Rohrabacher, for his opening statement.