

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

NEED FOR A NEW PARADIGM

Findings

There is no United States Government (USG) comprehensive strategy being implemented in the Afghanistan-Pakistan (AF-PK) region. No commitment of troops, funds, or effort in Afghanistan will eliminate the threat to the United States without a comprehensive strategy that encompasses efforts in Pakistan to eliminate al Qaeda and the Taliban insurgency emanating from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The FATA safehaven fuels the Afghan insurgency and is a strategic threat in its own right because it enables al Qaeda to organize, train, and plan operations against the United States homeland and against our allies.

While such a comprehensive strategy for the region may exist, no one in Washington or on the ground with whom we spoke, including our ambassadors, is aware of it. Rather, in Afghanistan and Pakistan, well-intentioned individuals in various elements are working in their own lanes and mission sets, yet nothing ties their efforts together as a whole for an achievable victory. Further, the current relationships among foreign entities operating in Afghanistan, including the United States and its departments and agencies, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) the United Nations (UN), and a host of other nations, are not conducive to a unified execution of the USG effort. U.S. personnel point to disparate priorities that sometimes have resulted in counter-productive actions and programs that have not always been tailored to local conditions. In short, the greatest contributor to the USG's failure to achieve stability in the region thus far has been uncoordinated activity. All USG personnel in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and in Washington with whom we spoke consistently expressed this concern.

Recommendation 1

The USG must develop and coalesce around a comprehensive strategy designed to meet a set of clearly defined goals for the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. True to basic counterinsurgency (COIN) principles, the strategy needs to be regional in breadth, locally tailored and adhered to by all USG elements in-theater. Currently, none of these three principles are being followed well by USG elements in the region.

Recommendation 2

The USG must first clearly define and prioritize America's regional goals in order to formulate the comprehensive regional strategy and to guide its implementation. These prioritized goals will serve to guide decision-making in the event of anticipated resource constraints and will allow for all U.S. elements in-theater to find common purpose in their missions and in what the USG is trying to achieve. We suggest that America's primary goal is to eliminate the terrorist threat to the United States emanating

from terrorist sanctuaries in the region and to replace those sanctuaries with secure environments maintained through stable governance in order to prevent their reversion to terrorist safe-havens. We believe other regional interests like nuclear non-proliferation and economic concerns should be addressed in the regional strategy as well. Additionally, we encountered a number of classified examples demonstrating the need to bring our efforts together while in-theater that can be discussed in person.

Recommendation 3

In order to implement the comprehensive regional strategy, the in-coming President should appoint and actively support a Washington-based Special Coordinator for USG efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The President should resist the temptation to try to replicate the success in Iraq through the efforts of a senior military commander in-theater. The Afghanistan problem spans the border with Pakistan and cannot be solved in a single country context. A Special Coordinator position is necessary in the AF-PK case to bring USG regional efforts together. The Special Coordinator's mission will be to bring USG efforts under the overall strategy, solicit and maintain international support, interface with our European partners and regional stakeholders to garner support for funding, troops, and potentially diplomatic compromises, and communicate difficult messages to regional players when necessary so that our country teams and military leaders maintain high rapport with their counterparts in-theater. The Special Coordinator must have more authority than a deputy National Security Advisor in the White House and must transcend Department of Defense (DoD) and civilian agency structures. Anything less than a Special Coordinator actively backed by the President would likely just add to the bureaucracy. As a means to integrate better DoD and civilian efforts under the Special Coordinator, a high-level active duty military officer should be considered to serve as the Special Coordinator's deputy.

PAKISTAN

Findings

Coalition forces have won every major battle with the Afghan insurgents, but these tactical successes have not resulted in a strategic victory, largely because insurgents are free to retreat and regroup in sanctuaries across the AF-PK border in the Pashtun tribal belt of Pakistan. Pakistan's FATA and eastern Afghanistan blend together in many areas. In 1893, the British forced the ruler of Afghanistan to come to agreement under duress to demarcate the border between Afghanistan and what is now Pakistan. Tribal groups span both sides of this "border," known as the Durand Line, but they do not recognize it as a legitimate boundary, resulting in conflict on both sides of the border. Further, Pakistan's army is not organized, trained, or equipped to deal with the counterinsurgency and counterterrorism mission the border conflict presents.

Efforts in the FATA have been challenged by Pakistan's ambivalence toward, and perhaps outright support for, the Taliban. While the U.S. Intelligence Community differs on the extent of the relationships, at least some elements of Pakistan's military and

intelligence services appear to be ambivalent about the anti-Taliban and anti-militant mission in the FATA, in part due to their history of close ties to the Taliban in Afghanistan's conflict with the Soviet Union and Pakistan's use of militant proxies in its conflict with India. Pakistan's desire to counter India's growing influence in Afghanistan and concerns about U.S. long-term commitments to Afghanistan increase Pakistan's interest in hedging its bets by ensuring that it will be able to have a working relationship with the Taliban to balance Indian and Iranian interests if the United States withdraws.

Concerns about Pakistani resolve have prompted suggestions that the USG increase unilateral action, but the USG needs Pakistani cooperation to eliminate the threat from the FATA and cannot afford to lose Pakistani support for our efforts in Afghanistan. Eighty percent of our logistical support for the forces in Afghanistan transits Pakistan and there currently is no viable land alternative. After the September 3, 2008, U.S. military raid into Pakistan, Islamabad temporarily halted all fuel shipments to U.S. forces operating in Afghanistan. A permanent halt of fuel or other shipments would significantly damage coalition operations in Afghanistan.

Recommendation 4

The USG must dramatically increase our engagement with Pakistan to develop a partnership toward meeting U.S. and Pakistani goals for the region. The Special Coordinator, appointed by the President, should work with Pakistan to determine what it wants in exchange for genuine and measurable progress against terrorists and insurgents in the FATA, including the provision of effective and fair governance to the FATA. The USG should continue to offer as much training and assistance to Pakistan as it will accept, but that assistance should be oriented toward assisting the Pakistani military in retooling itself for the COIN mission. As part of the Special Coordinator's outreach to Pakistan, the USG should commit to judicious use of unilateral action in the FATA, employing it only when targeting America's highest priority threats. In return, the Coordinator should seek acknowledgment from Pakistan that recognition of its sovereignty over the tribal areas requires Pakistan to prevent attacks from that territory on other sovereign nations.

Recommendation 4.1

As part of the engagement process, the next administration should begin an intensive diplomatic effort to develop solutions to conflicts between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Ronald Neuman recommends that the USG work to encourage AF-PK to agree that the current frontier will not be modified without the consent of both governments and their peoples. This would help officially recognize the actual situation, without forcing the Afghan government to compel its people to agree to a border they do not want. As part of this effort, the Special Coordinator should look for ways to alleviate Pakistan's concerns about India's influence in Afghanistan.

LOCALLY TARGETED SECURITY, GOVERNANCE, AND DEVELOPMENT

Findings

Representatives from several U.S. government agencies noted that food, shelter, and water are the most important items, after security, that we could provide, yet our priorities on the ground are somewhat misguided in providing them. This often occurs due to a disconnect between what is needed in a particular area and what the federal or provincial authorities determine to build there.

Furthermore, unity of command and effort is lacking in AF-PK—both civilian and military. Particularly in Afghanistan, many USG operations and programs are often unknown to other USG agencies and departments, and they are not coordinated to ensure local buy-in.

On the military side, forces do not seem to agree on common rules of engagement, and each element is not sufficiently equipped, trained, and logistically supported for a common military purpose. The inability of many coalition troops to carry out the COIN mission and the lack of sufficient indigenous forces means that there simply are not enough troops who can carry out the “clear” and “hold” missions in the “clear, hold, build” strategy. A spillover effect of inadequate troop levels is that military operations have relied heavily on airpower as a force multiplier. The collateral damage which results from continuous and increasing air strikes is wearing on the Afghan public and is causing anger among the very population coalition forces are trying to protect. The U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan stated that the United States must reduce the number of civilian casualties. We cannot retain the support of the Afghan population if they perceive themselves as victims of our efforts.

On the civilian side, no single nation or international organization sets, articulates, or represents the policies and civil efforts of over 40 nations, the UN, the World Bank, the European Union, and numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the region. The approach adopted for Afghanistan in 2002, in which each lead nation took responsibility for a certain sector (Germany for the Afghan National Police (ANP), Japan for demobilizing militias, Italy for the judicial sector, the United States for the Afghan National Army (ANA), and the United Kingdom for counternarcotics), has failed to yield adequate resources or effective multinational collaboration. The Afghanistan Study Group noted that, with few exceptions, no lead nation has devoted the necessary attention or money to its sector, and no lead nation has assumed responsibility for economic development.¹ Economic development policy was intended to be the purview of the new Afghan government, working in conjunction with Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs)—civil-military units designed to provide governance and development assistance in semi-secure environments—but the Afghan government has not been capable of coordinating donor efforts and the PRTs lack an overarching concept of operations that serves USG and NATO strategic goals. The result has been that the efforts of the 26

¹ Afghanistan Study Group, *Revitalizing Our Efforts, Rethinking Our Strategies*, January 2008, p. 20.

PRTs are disparate, vary greatly in structure and function, are uncoordinated, and have a mixed record of success, particularly in targeting the needs of Afghan locals.

In short, we have failed to recognize that the mission to eliminate the terrorist threat from Afghanistan is broader than we originally anticipated and we have failed to adjust accordingly, in military or financial terms. As noted by Bruce Riedel in August 2007, “we have tried to rebuild a country devastated by a quarter century of wars, invasion, and terror on the cheap.”² If we continue on this path, we will surely fail.

Recommendation 5

The USG must secure the support of traditional local leaders to make progress in the areas of security, development, and governance and must encourage those leaders to spearhead those efforts to the greatest extent possible. The new U.S. Special Coordinator should work with the Afghan Government in reviewing the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS), prioritizing its projects and garnering international financial and military support for implementing them in a more coordinated fashion. At a minimum, the U.S. Special Coordinator could bring together USG and U.S. NGO cooperation as much as possible to work with local leaders to meet their needs. As more development projects begin on the Pakistani side of the border, the U.S. Special Coordinator should work with the Pakistani government to ensure as much coordination as possible.

Security

Findings

Afghanistan is larger in area and population than Iraq but has far fewer international troops and indigenous security forces. The number of indigenous security forces trained in Iraq is approximately 545,000, while Afghanistan, nearly four times the size of Iraq, has a target of only 200,000 total Afghan security forces. Even with recent improvements and force level increases, the current and projected Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) end state is inadequate to secure stability. The ANA has only 67,000 troops with a current target of 80,000 (due to increase to 122,000). The ANP is severely underfunded, undertrained, and poorly equipped. Additionally, the Afghan populace views the police as predatory and corrupt vice a source of protection.³ Nonetheless, Afghan security forces are one of the major components to winning the war.

Additionally, not all of the 47,000 NATO troops are effective for the security mission in Afghanistan. Many NATO nations sent troops to Afghanistan presuming that the mission would be peacekeeping and reconstruction, rather than fighting an insurgency. The mission of NATO in Afghanistan has become a test of the alliance's political will and military capabilities. The inequity of burden-sharing in combat operations remains an important point of contention in the alliance. Forces from the United States, Britain, Canada, and the Netherlands, which are deployed in the east and

² Bruce Riedel, *How to Tackle Rising Instability and Insurgency in Afghanistan*, August 23, 2007.

³ Samina Ahmed, *Pakistan and Afghanistan – Prospects for Stability*, May 2008.

south, bear the brunt of the fighting.⁴ Current non-US NATO forces deployed in Afghanistan are in many cases woefully inadequate and under-resourced for the task. Some are poorly trained or not trained in the skills necessary to conduct operations in the brutal Afghan environment. Many are casualty averse and lack COIN force enablers such as helicopters and UAV support, human source intelligence, civil affairs and special operations units,⁵ and their own logistics.

Several NATO nations have barred their soldiers from operating in high-threat environments and engaging in dangerous missions. Others prohibit their troops from participating in combat operations except for self-defense. Germany, for example, has 3,300 well-trained troops in Afghanistan, most of whom are deployed in what has been a relatively quiet area of northern Afghanistan. German troops patrol only in armored personnel carriers and do not leave their bases at night. “The de facto segregation of coalition forces into ‘frontline’ and ‘stand aside’ units has undermined NATO’s effectiveness, flexibility and unity of purpose”⁶ and undermines the credibility of NATO as a modern war-fighting alliance.

The ANSF, under USG oversight, have greater opportunities for strategic success than international forces alone. For example, when U.S. forces go into an area and incur collateral damage, the public out-cry and media attention is dramatic and covered widely in Afghan and international press; this sets back the overall USG effort. Conversely, when Afghans cause collateral damage it is more acceptable and resulting problems often can be settled quietly. Additionally, ANSF have the ability to pose as insurgents in order to infiltrate enemy areas, as they have started doing, multiplying opportunities for “soft” take-downs.

Building a competent ANSF is the best long-term and cost-effective solution for achieving stability in Afghanistan, but the current security force training effort by the USG is inadequate. According to the Commander of Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan, who is responsible for training the ANSF, embedded trainers, mentors, and advisors are insufficient in number for the task. Additionally, some National Guard and Reserve soldiers are ill-suited to the training mission. In addition to training, the ANA needs transport aircraft to move troops and vehicles around the country quickly, along with attack and heavy lift helicopters, and better logistics, medical, and engineering capabilities.

Recommendation 5.1

As part of the new Afghanistan-Pakistan strategy, the coalition should ensure that appropriate forces are matched to corresponding missions. A major goal of the strategy should be to train effectively a large contingent of Afghans who can be responsible to “hold and build.” This effort will require an increase in U.S.

⁴ Congressional Research Service, *NATO in Afghanistan: A Test of the Transatlantic Alliance*, October 23, 2007

⁵ General Barry R McCaffrey USA (Ret), Memorandum regarding Visit to NATO SHAPE Headquarters and Afghanistan, 21-26 July 2008, July 30, 2008, p. 5.

⁶ James Phillips and Lisa Curtis, *The War in Afghanistan: More Help Needed*, April 17, 2008, p. 6.

ground forces (and international forces which do not have caveats, or are willing to remove them) primarily to train and grow a much larger ANA and a larger, effective, and non-corrupt ANP (the ANP piece will take more time). Afghan security forces must be put in the lead as much as possible, employing them in the pursuit of USG objectives. An increase in U.S. troops and ANSF will help reduce the reliance on air power and will enable increased security along transportation routes, the Pakistani border, around Kabul, and gradually in other areas. In addition to the Department of Defense, other USG elements and resources should be used to support Afghan security efforts to clear and hold critical areas threatened or influenced by insurgents.

Recommendation 5.2

The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Commander should shift the missions of NATO members who maintain caveats due to their own domestic politics or who prove ineffective at “holding” to more appropriate missions where their ineffectiveness is not counter-productive to the overall effort. Codifying the division of NATO forces into “front line” forces and “stand aside” forces may not be in the long-term interest of NATO, but doing so in the short-term will help achieve USG objectives in Afghanistan.

Development

Findings

As noted earlier, economic development policy is in disarray. For example, currently USAID development projects are approved at the district level where district Governors consult with U.S. advisors and send a list of proposed projects to the Provincial Technical Working Group. The Group sends the list to the Development Council, and the Governor and PRT decide which projects should be funded. This often results in a disconnect between the needs of locals and the desires of the Governor and PRT. In one area we visited, we observed a multi-million dollar unfinished “road to nowhere” cut into the side of a mountain. The project was constructed at considerable risk to the U.S. engineers who took fire during its construction. When asked why the project was started and then left unfinished, the answer was telling. The Army built the road because President Karzai asserted that roads were a high priority in Afghanistan. The Army thought that a road in this particular area would help the locals get crops to market and thus contribute to their economic well-being. The problem was that the locals were subsistence farmers and did not want or need a road—they wanted a well for clean drinking water. Because the Army built something the locals did not want, the locals did not protect it. Rather, they allowed the Taliban to come to the area and take shots at the engineers until the Army realized the project’s futility and stopped construction.

In addition, development funds are insufficient to meet needs in Afghanistan and international donors, in many cases, have not met their funding commitments. Bruce Riedel of Brookings noted that “instead of a massive economic reconstruction aid effort akin to the Marshall Plan of the 1940s, Afghans have gotten less economic aid on a per

capita basis than Haitians or Bosnians.”⁷ Targets of opportunity to provide development funds emerge following military “clearing” efforts and windows of opportunity often open to reward leaders who have agreed to renounce the insurgency. USG commanders and the U.S. Ambassador need discretionary funds for immediate initiation of such projects.

Recommendation 5.3

The USG needs to distribute development funds at the local level or directly to contractors and vendors while giving the Afghan government the public credit for aid projects. Such a development model works as follows: the USG employs trusted, indigenous personnel to interface with locals in a given locale to ascertain the true need of the community; the indigenous USG controlled personnel interface with the Afghan government to approve the project and then allow the government to announce to the community that the government has secured the project for the local area. Next, the USG either directly pays the contractors or transfers funds to the government and closely monitors their direct transfer to the contractors. This system allows for better control and accountability of U.S. funds, while allowing the Afghan government to take the credit for the projects, thereby increasing the public trust. It also allows the Afghan government to claim credit for achieving objectives linked to the Afghan National Development Strategy, and gives the locals what they really need, making them more apt to protect the aid project from the militants.

Recommendation 5.4

The U.S. Special Coordinator should convene a development board to coordinate USG efforts and to assist aid agencies not under USG control in implementing the coordinated plan. Additionally, if the PRT model is to continue, officials on the ground agreed that a District Reconstruction Team (DRT) model would have greater success than a conventional PRT because a DRT would be closer to the populace and, therefore, closer to the problems. Decentralized decision-making on aid projects would eliminate delays in meeting needs on the ground and allow our forces to respond better to local needs. Congress should amend chapter 20 of title 10, United States Code, to establish permanently the Commanders’ Emergency Response Program to provide funds for urgent humanitarian and reconstruction needs in the field. The authority should extend both to the U.S. Ambassador and to regional military commanders.

Governance and Rule of Law

Findings

The Afghanistan Study Group notes that the Afghan government and international community have focused on high profile events, such as elections and the new constitution, “but the difficult work of creating a strong system of central government and

⁷ Bruce Riedel, Interview given to Shakila Khalje, *How to Tackle Rising Instability and Insurgency in Afghanistan*, August 23, 2007.

provincial governance that enables and empowers accountable actors has been lacking.”⁸ These events, while significant, have not led to a government capable of providing essential services or extending its writ throughout the nation. Due to the more than 20-year civil war, the pool of educated professionals available to lead and staff government positions is small. In addition, Kabul’s unwillingness or inability to deal with corruption and the government’s reliance on weak and predatory local leaders who do not have legitimacy in much of the country are contributing in large part to the citizens’ declining faith in democracy and to the growth of the insurgency.

For governance initiatives to succeed, the Taliban must be replaced by a combination of police, local security, courts, and government services at the local level, and the government must deal with endemic corruption. This will not be easy. As noted earlier, the police are insufficient in number and quality, and corruption is a systemic element within Afghan society.

Ensuring the success of the National Justice Sector Strategy and the National Justice Program requires oversight and, in the provinces, better coordination of effort. To that end, the UN has established provincial justice coordination as a way to deconflict rule of law activities by international donors. Department of State officials believe that the Afghan government needs to be more forceful in demanding performance from the donors and in conducting sound oversight of rule of law efforts.

The detention component of rule of law is also in need of drastic change. None of the 203 district detention facilities in the 34 provinces meet international standards. The number of prisoners in the Afghanistan corrections system is on the rise (from 4,000 in 2004 to 12,000 in 2008) and prisoners routinely carry cell phones and knives. There is also no present capacity to segregate prisoners, often leaving children mixed in with adult offenders, including cases where a mother is incarcerated and her children accompany her to prison. Furthermore, the records systems for detainees are so poor that prisoners are often held beyond their imposed sentences or are released inadvertently. In addition, security is problematic as evidenced by the escape of 870 fugitives, including 390 Taliban militants, from the main prison in Kandahar in June 2008.

Recommendation 5.5

The Department of Justice (DoJ) should serve as the federal government’s lead agency for the rule of law mission to draw upon its unique expertise and extensive contacts and liaison with the Department of State and local law enforcement. The Department of State would ensure that DoJ’s rule of law efforts fit seamlessly into the overall reconstruction and stabilization effort. The DoJ also would be responsible for ensuring effective joint, interagency and multinational coordination. DoJ’s International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program, which was able to work dramatically to reduce corruption in Indonesia over a period of years, should be expanded in Afghanistan. Efforts to pay fair salaries to police, prosecutors, defense counsels, and judges should be pursued to help reduce the lure of corruption. Congress should fund the Civilian

⁸ Afghanistan Study Group, *Revitalizing Our Efforts, Rethinking Our Strategies*, January 2008, p. 27.

Stabilization Initiative on the condition that DoJ is provided with funding and personnel necessary to implement effectively the rule of law mission. At least one service judge advocate, who is not presently serving as a command or assistant command judge advocate, should be assigned as a dedicated rule of law attorney to each PRT in Afghanistan. As the nation-wide system is rolled out, the more remote and tribal areas should be allowed to continue traditional tribal justice practices until the federal government has a strong enough presence in the area to implement and emplace its rule of law components. If rule of law efforts outstrip basic security and governance efforts, the initiative will be counter-productive; hence, gradual implementation locale-by-locale is crucial.

Narcotics-Agriculture

Findings

America's interest in Afghanistan's narcotics industry stems from its bankrolling of the Taliban and its corrupting influence on the Afghan government. The trafficking of Afghan drugs provides financial and logistical support to a range of criminal organizations, militia commanders, corrupt officials, and extremist groups that continue to operate in and around Afghanistan.⁹ Former Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte told Congress in January 2007 that "the drug trade contributes to endemic corruption at all levels of government and undercuts public confidence."¹⁰ Former ISAF Commanding General Dan McNeill stated, "When I see a poppy field, I see it turning into money and then into IEDs, AKs, and RPGs."¹¹ Successful counternarcotics campaigns in the Andes, Thailand, Burma, Pakistan, and India have taught us that a balanced and coordinated effort is the only way to achieve sustainable reductions in drug production.

Shortly after the 2001 Bonn Conference, the United Kingdom was designated as the lead nation for international counternarcotics efforts in Afghanistan.¹² Working closely with the Governments of Afghanistan and Britain, the *2007 U.S. Counternarcotics Strategy for Afghanistan* was adopted as U.S. policy.¹³ To date, however, these efforts have yielded mixed results.

The Afghan government and the international community agree that forced, targeted, non-negotiated eradication of the fields owned by the wealthy land owners is a necessary law enforcement and counterinsurgency activity.¹⁴ Still, there exists a great opportunity for the Department of Agriculture to address agro-development needs in the

⁹ Congressional Research Service, *Afghanistan: Narcotics and U.S. Policy*, December 6, 2007, p. 1.

¹⁰ John D. Negroponte, Unclassified Statement for the Record. Annual Threat Hearing of the Director of National Intelligence before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, January 11, 2007.

¹¹ General Dan McNeill, Remarks to the press in Kabul, Afghanistan, January 2, 2008.

¹² Congressional Research Service, *Afghanistan: Narcotics and U.S. Policy*, December 6, 2007, p. 11.

¹³ Thomas A. Schweich, Testimony Before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, October 4, 2007.

¹⁴ *Fighting the Opium Trade in Afghanistan: Myths, Facts, and Sound Policy*, Joint Statement by the US and UK, March 2008.

AF-PK region as part of a comprehensive strategy to reduce narcotics growth and to increase development. Afghan farmers need agriculture experts to help them think through how best to develop sustainable agriculture in their specific locales. A notable model is the success of the Missouri National Guard in Nangarhar Province, where Missouri farmers with agriculture expertise were able to go in as Guardsmen providing their own security, while teaching locals how to increase crop production.

There are numerous agriculture opportunities in Afghanistan. The USAID agriculture representative in Afghanistan said that spices and orchard and vine crops do well in Afghanistan and bring in more money, but they require an extensive market infrastructure and years to develop. For example, pomegranate trees are highly coveted in Afghanistan and there is a market for them in Afghanistan and overseas. Afghanistan exported 50,000 tons of pomegranates to India last year, yet the Indian market could absorb one million tons. Despite this promising opportunity, the agriculture representative noted that “an investment in tree crops is an investment in the future,” which most Afghans cannot afford, especially if they are concerned that the Taliban will continue to grow in strength and will burn down their investment. U.S. officials believe that an extensive road-building effort in the locales that can move beyond subsistence farming is imperative to modernize the country’s economy, but protecting farmers from militants is a necessary first step toward any long-term agro-development effort.

Recommendation 5.6

The U.S. Special Coordinator should work closely with and help enable British and Afghan counternarcotics elements. Interdiction efforts should focus on the trafficking networks, and eradication efforts should be led by Afghan forces with coalition forces in a supporting role. Attacking the networks would impact the Taliban, corrupt officials, and international drug traffickers more than the farmers, and putting an Afghan “face” on eradication efforts would lend credibility to Kabul’s counternarcotics efforts.

Recommendation 5.7

The Department of Agriculture should partner with agriculture universities, agro-business, and other agriculture experts to form teams to help Afghan locals with sustainable agriculture development. The teams could serve within PRTs, or within National Guard or other units, that will protect them and take them to areas where they can add significant value to development efforts underway.

Recommendation 5.8

The USG should pay farmers to plant alternatives, such as vines, orchards, or spices, during the three to five year period required to get an initial harvest, in an effort to encourage them not to plant poppy. This would not be a “pay not to plant system” and would need to be closely monitored to ensure that the farmers are planting alternative crops. To the greatest extent possible, Afghan security forces must offer protection to the farmers in protecting their crops from

Taliban or drug lords, but it remains the responsibility of the farmers to nurture and cultivate the new crops.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

Findings

Real opportunities exist for public diplomacy in AF-PK, yet no one has taken the lead for the United States in this area. Complicating such an effort is the lack of a comprehensive strategy with a tailored message to communicate. In Afghanistan today, even on a tactical level, USAID, the DoD, and other agencies have some very good news stories to tell, but in many cases they operate under ISAF controlled PRTs outside the focus of the U.S. Embassy. The State Department has a representative at these PRTs, but there is no indication that they work closely with the Embassy public diplomacy officers to ensure coordination. In other areas, they are limited to press releases which are largely ineffective in a mostly illiterate society. The U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Officer in Kabul relayed that 95 percent of public diplomacy in Afghanistan is in the form of press releases.

In Afghanistan, the Embassy could coordinate efforts to build upon the work of the DoD and USAID. For example, both USAID and the Embassy have programs which train and assist Afghan journalists, and USAID has established and funded dozens of Afghan radio stations. However, there is no coordinated effort to ensure that they are not duplicative, nor is there an attempt to use these programs to leverage new ones.

In Pakistan, on the heels of the Marriott Hotel bombing and the recent murder of 60 tribal elders in Orakzai, a rare opportunity exists for break-through public diplomacy efforts, primarily through encouraging and supporting Pakistani-generated messaging against the terrorist threat. Pakistani journalists and thinkers are finally becoming more vocal against militant Islamists. While not necessarily favorable to the United States, they are open to assistance in promoting their message of moderation. The Public Affairs Officer in Islamabad has recently submitted a comprehensive proposal to the Department of State on new efforts to support the anti-militant message, to include media support, exchanges, and engagement.

Recommendation 6

The U.S. Special Coordinator should include in the comprehensive regional strategy, a strategic communications plan, coordinated with the Departments of State and Defense, USAID, and other USG public diplomacy offices. The strategy in Afghanistan should emphasize the theme of “Afghans solving problems, with international and U.S. support.” Public diplomacy efforts in Pakistan should be heavily resourced and should include the support of Islamist reformers, the launch and funding of moderate sympathizers’ media campaigns, and an overall budgetary increase in International Military Education and Training as well as university and cultural exchanges.

TWO RECOMMENDATIONS TO AVOID

There are two recommendations we have come across during our research that we strongly reject. First, is the “go it alone” philosophy, of which some believe they see evidence due to increasing U.S. cross-border attacks into the FATA. The USG had considerable leeway and international support in the early years of Operation Enduring Freedom and could have pursued cross-border scenarios at that time. In 2002, it may well have been better to ask forgiveness than permission, and the world would likely have “forgiven.” Now, however, seven years into the conflict, and facing a much different international situation, the United States cannot afford to push Pakistani and international opinion to the brink with ever-increasing cross-border incursions. Pakistan controls the USG’s only viable supply line into Afghanistan. Pakistan’s parliament recently expressed strong disapproval of such U.S. actions in their sovereign territory. Even if President Zardari and military officials were willing to turn a blind eye to U.S. actions privately, it is not worth the strategic loss in overall Pakistani and world opinion. U.S. cross-border incursions should be reserved for only the top high-value targets.

Second, is the current refrain of “just send more troops.” This should only be heeded under a new comprehensive strategy. Sending more troops into the USG’s current modus operandi in the region is a recipe for following the Soviet model to disaster in the 1980s. More troops only make sense under a new comprehensive strategy for the region.

CONCLUSION

The USG must adjust expectations for its efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan and gain long-term public support. The in-coming President should initiate a media campaign to communicate his vision of USG efforts in the region. Success in Afghanistan and Pakistan is achievable, but many changes will come gradually and progress throughout the region will be unequal. For example, as we were told on the ground, in northeastern Afghanistan in Naray Province and in Pakistan’s Bajaur Agency it is not uncommon for a young boy to strike a teenage girl and tell her to get back to work. In such hardened, remote tribal areas, change will not occur overnight. The American people need to be aware that a number of efforts they would like to see furthered entail a long-term commitment in the region.

Finally, there are a number of other findings and recommendations embedded in our research on this problem set. A number of Pakistan-specific initiatives not mentioned in the above recommendations also must be addressed within the regional strategy. We stand ready to work collaboratively with all parties on this vital national security imperative and to work on your behalf to resource appropriately the way ahead.