



Afghanistan Policy Page

A one-page brief from the [Afghanistan Congressional Communications Hub](#) on a major issue concerning U.S. policy and engagement in Afghanistan.

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In Quotes: Afghan Delegation to Washington (10-12th May 2010)

US-Afghan Relations

Obama:

- The ability to disagree on issues of importance to our respective countries and peoples is not an obstacle to achieving our shared objectives. Rather, it reflects a level of trust that is essential to any meaningful dialogue and enduring strategic partnership.

Karzai:

- We'll be having disagreements on issues from time to time, but that is the sign of a mature relationship and the sign of a steady relationship.

Governance in Afghanistan

Clinton:

- Long-term stability requires improved government capacity at every level. It requires a common and concerted effort against corruption, implementing the vision and proposals that President [Karzai] laid out. And I applaud President Karzai's steps to fight corruption, including by strengthening the role of the high office of Oversight.

Progress and Benchmarks

Obama:

- There is no denying the progress that the Afghan people have made in recent years - in education, in health care and economic development.

Karzai:

- We have made immense progress in the absolutely essential areas of our life, from education, to health, to communication, to roads, to transportation, to the army, to the police, to the economy, to the growth of our national income, to the foreign reserves that we have nearly \$4.4 billion today from only 180 million of seven years ago.
- Once we are on our feet with our own economy, with our mineral resources, with our business, with Afghanistan becoming a hub for transportation in central Asia and South and West Asia, Afghanistan...will be a strong and good and economically viable partner with the United States and our other allies.

Reconciliation, Reintegration and the Peace Jirga

Karzai:

- Afghanistan is seeking peace because through military means alone we are not going to get our objectives of bringing stability and peace to Afghanistan and the defeat of terrorism.
- There are thousands of the Taliban who are not ideologically oriented, who are not part of al Qaeda or other terrorist networks, who are not against America either, it's this group that we are addressing in the peace jirga.
- Those within the Taliban leadership structure who, again, are not part of al Qaeda or the terrorist networks, or ideologically against Afghanistan's progress and rights and constitution...are [also] welcome.
- The peace consultative jirga is [also] intended for consulting the Afghan people, taking their advice on how and through which means and which speed should the Afghan government proceed in the quest for peace.

Obama:

- The United States supports the efforts of the Afghan government to open the door to Taliban who cut their ties to al Qaeda, abandon violence, and accept the Afghan constitution, including respect for human rights... This has to be an Afghan-led effort, though. It's not one that's dictated by the United States or any other outside power.
- The incentives for the Taliban to lay down arms...and make peace with the Afghan government in part depends on our effectiveness in breaking their momentum militarily....And so the timing, how the reconciliation process works is in part going to be dependent on our success in terms of carrying out our mission there.

Timeframe, US Commitment & Transition of Responsibility

Obama:

- [There] is a recognition on both sides that transformation is not going to happen overnight; that a country that's come out of 30 years of war and dire poverty is not going to suddenly change across the board.
- We are steadily making progress. It's not overnight; it's not going to be instant...there's going to be some hard fighting over the next several months.
- I am confident that we're going to be able to reduce our troop strength in Afghanistan starting in July 2011...but we are not suddenly, as of July 2011, finished with Afghanistan.
- We're going to still be putting in resources and we're still going to be a friend to the Afghan people in their efforts to stabilize.
- We're working with the Afghan government and our allies on a broader framework to guide the transition of responsibility for security, development and governance in Afghan provinces. I've also reaffirmed that the United States is committed to transferring responsibility for detention facilities to the Afghan government.

McChrystal:

- Our efforts in Afghanistan are ultimately about changing the perceptions of people. Afghans long impacted by conflict and struggle believe more of what they see than what they hear. Only when they experience security from coercion and only when they benefit from better governance will they begin to believe in the possibilities of the future.
- This is a process that takes time. It will demand courage and resilience. We will encounter increased violence as our combined security forces expand into Taliban-controlled areas. Increasingly, the momentum will shift to the Afghan forces. Over time, security responsibilities will transition to Afghans.

Civilian Casualties

Karzai:

- Afghanistan will be seeking protection for its civilian population for which I'm very thankful to General McChrystal for the efforts that he's putting in for the protection of the Afghan civilians....we must be working very hard to prevent completely...these possibilities of casualties and the consequences that it has for us all.

Obama:

- We've taken extraordinary measures to avoid civilian casualties. After all, it's the Afghan people we are working to protect from the Taliban, which is responsible for the vast majority of innocent civilian deaths.
- When there is a civilian casualty, that is not just a political problem for me. I am ultimately accountable...and that something that I have to carry with me...We have an interest in reducing civilian casualties not because it's a problem for President Karzai; we have an interest in reducing civilian casualties because I don't want civilians killed.

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