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Testimony of

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**Oversight of U.S.-Pakistan Relations:
From Ad Hoc and Transactional to Strategic and Enduring**

¹ The Council on Foreign Relations takes no institutional position on policy issues. All statements of fact and expressions of opinion contained in this testimony are the sole responsibility of the author.

Thank you Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee. I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss Pakistan's tribal areas in the context of U.S.-Pakistan relations.

Today, few places on earth are as important to U.S. national security as the tribal belt along Pakistan's border with Afghanistan. The region serves as a safe haven for a core group of nationally and internationally networked terrorists, a training and recruiting ground for Afghan Taliban, and, increasingly, a hotbed of indigenous militancy that threatens the stability of Pakistan's own state and society. Should another 9/11-type attack take place in the United States, it will likely have its origins in this region. As long as Pakistan's tribal areas are in turmoil, the mission of building a new, democratic, and stable Afghanistan cannot succeed.

Nearly seven years after 9/11, neither the United States nor Pakistan has fully come to terms with the enormity of the challenge in the tribal belt. Washington has failed to convince Pakistanis that the United States has positive intentions in the region and is committed to staying the course long enough to implement lasting, constructive change. Pakistan, for its part, has demonstrated a disturbing lack of capacity and, all too often, an apparent lack of will to tackle head-on the security, political, or developmental deficits that have produced an explosion of terrorism and extremism within its borders and beyond. Islamabad's conflicted views and priorities with respect to this fight have deep roots; for much of its history, the Pakistani state has employed militants as tools to project power and influence throughout the region.

In order to begin making progress in the tribal areas, the United States must build strong working relationships with Pakistani leaders and institutions, both military and civilian. The alternatives, ranging from reluctant, piecemeal cooperation to an outright rupture in bilateral relations, are bound to be far more costly and counterproductive to American interests over the long run. And despite the inevitable frustrations that will plague the U.S.-Pakistan partnership, it

cannot be founded on coercive threats of U.S. sanctions or unilateral military activity. Such coercion is profoundly counterproductive because it empowers those in Pakistan who already suspect U.S. ill intentions and it undermines Washington's real and potential allies in the Pakistani political system.

Rather than threats, Washington should employ a strategy of enhanced cooperation and structured inducements, in which the United States designs its assistance to bring U.S. and Pakistani officials closer together and provides Pakistan with the specific tools required to confront the threats posed by militancy, terrorism, and extremism.

In his first six months in office, the new U.S. president should articulate a formal, comprehensive vision for U.S. policy in the tribal areas, one that prepares both Americans and Pakistanis for a cooperative effort that extends to other facets of the bilateral relationship and will—even if successful—far outlast the next administration. The U.S. government should place Pakistan/Afghanistan second only to Iraq in its prioritization of immediate national security issues, and should move quickly to reassess assistance programming and to invest in U.S. personnel and institutions required for a long-term commitment to the region.

Recommendations for U.S. policy toward Pakistan include:

Strategic Shift: Formalize Directives and Refocus Bureaucracy

- Designate a new deputy-level coordinator for Pakistan-Afghanistan and task him or her to draft a National Security Presidential Directive for Pakistan's tribal areas.
- Build the United States' capacity for maintaining a sustained commitment to Pakistan's tribal areas by investing in expanded institutions and specialized personnel, particularly within the State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the Office of Defense Representative, Pakistan.

Bilateral Policy: Intensify Partnership with Pakistan and Build Capacity

- Establish a new U.S.-Pakistan Joint Security Coordination Committee to improve bilateral confidence and information sharing on political dynamics related to the tribal areas.
- Convene bimonthly meetings of a “U.S.-Pakistan Defense Consultative Group” to improve military-military cooperation.
- Publicly express support for basic reform measures in Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas, including the extension of the Political Parties Act and amendment of the Frontier Crimes Regulation.
- Provide advisers to assist Pakistan’s strategic communications effort.
- Clarify U.S. objectives and specific redlines for Pakistani negotiations with tribal leaders.
- Task the Defense Consultative Group to develop a road map for greater coordination and integration of the various Pakistani security forces in the tribal areas.
- Enhance USAID’s “virtual” forward presence in the FATA by investing in communications technologies to connect with the field offices of Pakistan’s political agents.
- Establish a civilian conservation corps for the FATA.
- Press for, and support, efforts by the Pakistani government to implement a mechanism for consultations between tribesmen and the government regarding a road map for political reform in the FATA. Work with Islamabad and provincial governments to formulate alternative strategies to reform the judiciary and improve the government’s capacity to deliver services throughout the tribal areas, and press Islamabad to formulate a long-term development plan for Balochistan.
- Support the formation of a new National Security Council–like institution in Islamabad charged with enhancing coordination between civilian, defense, and intelligence agencies.

Multilateral Policy: Coordinate with Other Concerned States

- Propose that the NATO's North Atlantic Council should open a diplomatic mission in Islamabad.
- Facilitate India-Pakistan normalization efforts through quiet diplomacy, and use more frequent meetings of the Defense Consultative Group to brief Islamabad on the character of U.S.-India cooperation efforts.
- Organize a multilateral donor/investor group, including China, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Japan, and the European Union to improve coordination, transparency, and conditionality of assistance to Pakistan.
- Support a permanent Pakistan-Afghanistan peace secretariat with a headquarters and binational staff.
- Develop plans for enhanced land trade between South and Central Asia with outreach to members of the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan.

Resources: Treat Pakistan's Tribal Areas as a Top-Tier National Security Threat

- Following strategic review and budgetary assessment, seek bipartisan congressional approval for long-term assistance guarantees to Pakistan for both military and civilian programming at or above existing levels.
- Employ quick impact programming as a political tool to establish inroads with tribal leaders in the FATA.
- Assist the expansion of a new provincial rapid-reaction police force in the North-West Frontier Province.
- Identify and fund high-profile "U.S.-Pakistan Friendship" development projects in the tribal areas as well as a variety of other projects with less prominent U.S. "branding."

- Press ahead with U.S. Reconstruction Opportunity Zones only if combined with infrastructure development projects to enhance profitability and to ensure that tribal populations benefit from the new economic opportunities.
- Expand U.S. military assistance on equipment and training to bolster the Pakistani army's commitment to counterterrorism and counterinsurgency missions.