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THE ELLIOTT SCHOOL
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Statement of Amb. Karl F. Inderfurth
John O. Rankin Professor of the Practice of International Affairs

“THE UNITED STATES AND PAKISTAN:
NAVIGATING A COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP”

before the

United States Commission on International Religious Freedom

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Madam Chairwoman, Members of the Commission:

In 2003 an Independent Task Force cosponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations and the Asia Society released a report entitled “New Priorities in South Asia: U.S. Policy Toward India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.” In its chapter on Pakistan, the Task Force began with this observation:

“Pakistan represents one of the toughest and most complex policy challenges that the United States faces anywhere in the world. The record of bilateral relations of the past fifty years has been checkered and volatile and the United States has been unable on a sustained basis to accomplish its key objective: a stable Pakistan at peace with itself and its neighbors.”

I cite this passage because I believe it places the subject of our hearing this afternoon—namely “The United States and Pakistan: Navigating a Complex Relationship”—in its proper context. To understand our current relationship with Pakistan, we must have a firm understanding of its past. For that reason, I would like to take a brief moment to review this “checkered and volatile” history.

Disenchanted Allies

Again, I am drawing from the report of the Independent South Asia Task Force:

“Interaction between the United States and Pakistan is handicapped by a half-century of relations that have been like a roller-coaster ride. Driven by a Cold War search for alliance, the United States made Pakistan a military ally against communism in 1954. Later, Islamabad served as the bridge for President Richard Nixon’s dramatic opening to China in 1971 and was the key partner in the struggle against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s. Today, the Bush administration talks of Pakistan as an ‘indispensable ally’ in the war against terrorism. Yet, during the 1960s Pakistan burgeoning friendship with then-enemy China angered Washington. In the late 1970s and again in the 1990s, Pakistan’s search for nuclear weapons triggered the suspension of American military and economic help. As the new century began, Islamabad’s support for the Taliban and for the insurgency in Kashmir, its nuclear weapons tests, and the army’s ouster of the elected civilian leadership further strained ties. The extraordinary volatility of past relations, especially the U.S. refusal to back then-ally Pakistan during its 1965 war with India and Washington’s imposition of nuclear sanctions in 1990 after the Soviet military withdrawal from Afghanistan, has convinced many Pakistanis that the United States is a fickle and unreliable friend.”

Given this brief summary, I think it is not surprising that the best diplomatic history of United States-Pakistan relations—written by Ambassador Dennis Kux—is entitled *Disenchanted Allies*. Understanding why there has been this “disenchantment” is, in my view, a prerequisite for any discussion about how we should proceed today in navigating this complex relationship. If we do not, I am convinced we are sure to run aground again.

9/11 Impact

Now let me proceed from this brief diplomatic history to where we are today—and cite another report that deals with Pakistan, this one by the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States.

The 9/11 Commission identified three countries that are most critical to the U.S. in countering the terrorist threat. The first cited was Pakistan. The commission correctly listed the most pressing issues on the U.S. agenda in Pakistan: countering the al-Qaeda and Taliban threat, both in Afghanistan and in Pakistan; preventing leakage of nuclear weapons technology to black markets (this, of course, refers to the A.Q. Khan affair); and shoring up Pakistan's weak political, judicial and social institutions so it can become a properly governed and hopefully democratic, moderate Muslim state. I would add to this list encouraging the peace process that is currently underway between Pakistan and India, which is showing great promise.

For reasons that require little explanation, during its first term the Bush administration largely focused its high-level attention with Pakistan on the first of the issues identified by the commission—the war against terrorism. Ties with Pakistan improved dramatically after President Pervez Musharraf became a key partner in that effort immediately after 9/11. Since then, Pakistan has provided invaluable assistance in countering al-Qaeda, and for that the Bush administration responded by lifting existing sanctions and promising a \$3 billion, five-year package of economic and military assistance. Today, U.S.-Pakistan relations are the best they have been in many years. The administration's recent decision to sell F-16 aircraft, ending a decade and a half controversy with Pakistan over these planes, will further strengthen U.S.-Pakistan ties.

Broaden U.S. Policy

Given this significant improvement in our relations, I believe it is now time for the United States to broaden its policy with Pakistan to focus more directly on those other issues identified by the 9/11 Commission. This is both the challenge and the opportunity the Bush administration has during its second term.

Broadening our policy would mean several things, including being more actively engaged in assisting President Musharraf deliver on his stated policy of “enlightened moderation” for Pakistan. In that regard, let me offer three examples of those things we should be doing. Each of these would, I might add, put the United States in a better position to address many of the concerns raised by this commission on issues relating to religious freedom and human rights in Pakistan.

First, the United States should provide expanded economic and social development aid to Pakistan, more than the \$1.5 billion over five years that the Bush administration has offered. Education should be the principal focus of this aid. Pakistan's primary education system ranks among the world's least effective. The average Pakistani boy receives only five years of schooling; the average girl just 2.5 years.

Of particular concern, highlighted by this commission in its 2005 annual report, has been the madrassa system of religious schools in Pakistan. Many of these schools serve a legitimate function, providing some education to children who have few other options given Pakistan's failing educational system. Others serve to radicalize the young, indoctrinating them with extremist and anti-American views. Unfortunately, the government of Pakistan has not lived up to its promises to regulate madrassas properly, or to close down those that have proven links to militant groups. The fact is that the magnitude of the task to reform and expand access to public education in Pakistan far exceeds both the external and Pakistani resources devoted to it.

Much more must be done, on an urgent basis.

Second, the U.S. should also work more directly with Pakistan to open up the political process well in advance of the national elections which are to be held in 2007. Democracy counts in Pakistan, and we should be doing more to advance it with programs aimed at strengthening the country's weak political institutions. As Ambassador Teresita Schaffer has said in an excellent CSIS report entitled *Pakistan's Future and U.S. Policy Options*, "The United States should speak out in support of Pakistan's parliament and political parties and should urge that they play their full role in the political process. These institutions will continue to atrophy if the United States and others continue to act as if they do not matter."

Third, the United States should also devote more attention and resources to other institutions that are critical to Pakistan's political and social development, including the judiciary, the police, the civil service, the election commission, and provincial governments.

I noted that this commission also recommended in its annual report that the U.S. government support, in conjunction with other donors, judicial reform and law enforcement training in Pakistan. Doing so could, over time, have a significant and beneficial impact on promoting human rights and the rule of law in that country. This also relates to the tragic case we are currently watching with great interest and concern, that of Mukhtar Mai. Now that this matter is before Pakistan's Supreme Court, let us hope that justice will finally be served.

Partners, not Targets

Having argued the need to broaden our relations with Pakistan, how should we go about achieving U.S. objectives? More to the point, in addition to the 'carrots' of frequent and high-level engagement and economic and military assistance, should the United States also attempt to pressure Pakistan with 'sticks', including the threat or imposition of sanctions? Returning to my brief history lesson at the beginning of this statement, we certainly have experience to draw on in answering this question. As Dennis Kux points out in *Disenchanted Allies*, "Few supposed U.S. friends, let alone allies, have been on the receiving end of as many sanctions as has Pakistan."

Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Khurshid Kasuri, was recently in Washington. In an interview prior to his arrival, he was asked whether the United States was pressuring Pakistan to pursue the current peace process with India. Kasuri's response was very blunt, and very instructive. He said: "We are not being pressurized. There is nobody who can tell Pakistan

to talk to India or else! It is humiliating. We will never take it. We are talking because we think it serves our national interest. No country can dictate to Pakistan.”

Whether on talks with India or other sensitive issues, Pakistan has demonstrated that it will firmly resist being dictated to by the United States, or by any other country. In fact, our 50 year “checkered and volatile” history with Pakistan suggests that sanctions have rarely furthered U.S. objectives and sometimes proved counterproductive.

While in Washington, Foreign Minister Kasuri suggested an alternative approach. “We cannot be targets and partners at the same time,” he said. “We’d rather be your partners.”

With U.S.-Pakistan relations at their best in many years, the Bush administration has an opportunity to assist Pakistan become the modern, tolerant, democratic Islamic country that its founders envisioned—and I believe the vast majority of the Pakistan people want. To help achieve this, the United States should be prepared, as the 9/11 Commission recommended, to make a “long-term commitment to the future of Pakistan...so long as Pakistan’s leaders remain willing to make difficult choices of their own.”

And to work together as partners.