

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 1, 2009

FACT SHEET: THE WAY FORWARD IN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

OUR MISSION: The President's speech reaffirms the March 2009 core goal: to disrupt, dismantle, and eventually defeat al-Qa'ida and to prevent their return to either Afghanistan or Pakistan. To do so, we and our allies will surge our forces, targeting elements of the insurgency and securing key population centers, training Afghan forces, transferring responsibility to a capable Afghan partner, and increasing our partnership with Pakistanis who are facing the same threats.

This region is the heart of the global violent extremism pursued by al-Qa'ida, and the region from which we were attacked on 9/11. New attacks are being planned there now, a fact borne out by a recent plot, uncovered and disrupted by American authorities. We will prevent the Taliban from turning Afghanistan back into a safe haven from which international terrorists can strike at us or our allies. This would pose a direct threat to the American homeland, and that is a threat that we cannot tolerate. Al-Qa'ida remains in Pakistan where they continue to plot attacks against us and where they and their extremist allies pose a threat to the Pakistani state. Our goal in Pakistan will be to ensure that al-Qa'ida is defeated and Pakistan remains stable.

REVIEW PROCESS: The review was a deliberate and disciplined three-stage process to check alignment of goals, methods for attaining those goals, and finally resources required. Over ten weeks, the President chaired nine meetings with his national security team, and consulted key allies and partners, including the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan. The President focused on asking the hard questions, took the time to carefully consider all of the options, and united a variety of competing views in his cabinet before agreeing to send any additional Americans to war.

As a result of the review, we have focused our mission and developed a common understanding regarding our regional approach and the need for international support. We will deploy forces into Afghanistan rapidly and will take advantage of these additional resources to create the conditions to begin to draw down combat forces in the summer of 2011, while maintaining a partnership with Afghanistan and Pakistan to protect our enduring interests in that region.

The meetings were focused on how best to ensure the al-Qa'ida threat is eliminated from the region and that regional stability is restored. We looked closely at the alignment of our efforts and the balance between civilian and military resources, both in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and the efforts of the U.S. and the international community.

A number of issues were explored in depth: national interests, core objectives and goals, counterterrorism priorities, safe havens for terrorist groups in Pakistan, the health of the global