

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN DANA ROHRABAH CER

“Islamist Militant Threats to Eurasia”

I hereby call this joint hearing of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats and the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade to order.

After Chairman Poe of the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation and Trade and I; and the Ranking Members of each subcommittee --- Mr. Keating and Mr. Sherman, each take 5 minutes to make opening remarks, each Member present will have one minute to make their opening remarks, alternating between Majority and Minority Members. And without objection, all Members may have five days to submit statements, questions, and extraneous materials for the record, subject to the length limitation in the rules. Hearing no objection, so ordered.

This is essentially a hearing about terrorism and how to fight it, so it is relevant to bring up the plight of Dr. Afridi, the man who confirmed the location of Osama bin Laden in his Pakistan safe house. Defense Secretary Panetta said Dr. Afridi played a pivotal role in making it possible for U.S. special forces could administer justice to bin Laden for his role in plotting the massacre of 3,000 Americans on 9/11.

Pakistan gave this mass murderer safe haven. Dr. Afridi, a Pakistani physician, risked his life so justice could be done. Then we left him behind and this hero is now sitting in a Pakistani prison. Dr. Afridi has been tortured and his family threatened. These are hostile acts by Pakistan against the United States and belie the notion that Pakistan is an ally in the war against terrorism.

I want Assistant Secretary Blake to take back to Foggy Bottom the message from the American people that the State Department needs to get Dr. Afridi released from prison using whatever pressure on Pakistan is needed. We cannot defeat terrorism in Eurasia or anywhere else if we cannot recruit allies, and we cannot recruit allies if we betray those who side with us to the enemy.

Since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States American policy toward the states of Central Asia has aimed at facilitating their cooperation with U.S. and NATO stabilization efforts in Afghanistan.

The level of cooperation by the government of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan has been outstanding since 9/11. There has even been a respectable level of cooperation with Russia in Afghanistan and other regional hot spots.

During most of this period, terrorism in Central Asia was kept to a minimum. However, since 2010, there has been an increase in violence by Islamist militants in Central Asia. A closer look at security risks in the region north of Afghanistan is overdue and is imperative as we move to a U.S. pullout of troops by 2014.

The point of today's hearing is to examine what efforts the United States is making to keep Central Asia stable and to improve relations with the states of the region. That means helping our friends, and, yes, helping the enemy of our enemy.

Just two days ago, a Congressional delegation led by me and including Mr. Poe returned from the region. The Members of the CODEL were impressed with the commitment of the Uzbekistan government to work with the United States to thwart the catastrophic consequences of the Taliban retaking Afghanistan.

We were also impressed that there are brave forces anxious to fight and defeat radical Islam.

The MEK, whose leaders we met in France, stands vulnerable but still willing to resist the mullah dictatorship in Iran.

The Baloch National Insurgency, whose representatives we met in London, were dedicated and courageous people who are under fire in Iran and Pakistan--- both terrorist supporting regimes that also oppress their own people in the name of militant Islam.

In short, radical Islam threatens us all. We should be supplying those courageous opponents of those who threaten us.