



Trip Report

Afghanistan & Pakistan

January 2-10, 2002

Rep. Frank Wolf
10th District, Virginia

This report provides details of my trip to Afghanistan and Pakistan January 2-10, 2002. Rep. Tony Hall of Ohio and Rep. Joe Pitts of Pennsylvania accompanied me on the trip. We were the first congressional delegation to visit Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban.



Children in Kabul.

We spent two days in Kabul, Afghanistan, where we saw and talked with Afghans of all walks of life. We also met with leaders of the new interim government, including Chairman Hamid Karzai; Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, the minister of foreign affairs who served as the foreign minister of the Northern Alliance; Professor Rasul Amin, the minister of education; and Dr. Sima Samar, the minister of women's affairs.

In addition, we met with Lakhdar Brahimi, the United Nations' special representative for Afghanistan, and Zalmay Khalilzad, a special assistant to President Bush for Southwest Asia.

We visited a number of sites in Kabul, including a pediatric hospital that is in desperate need of medicines, food and doctors, a school for Afghan girls that recently reopened following the fall of the Taliban regime, and the orphanage that New York City fire fighters and police officers toured just before Christmas. We also passed by the jail where Heather Mercer and Dana Curry, the two American women who worked for Shelter Now, were held captive for four months.

We toured the recently reopened U.S. Embassy and met with State Department staff who are assigned there. We also talked to a number of the U.S. Marines guarding the embassy. I was only able to meet with a handful of the U.S. airmen at Bagram Air Base, the airfield we flew into on a United Nations' World Food Programme plane. The airfield is about an hour's drive north of Kabul.

In Islamabad, Pakistan, we met with President General Pervez Musharraf and a number of other Pakistani government leaders, as well as U.S. Ambassador Wendy Chamberlin and several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) assisting with the humanitarian crisis in the region. NGOs serving in the region include: Catholic Relief Services; Church World Service; International Medical Corps;

International Rescue Committee; Mercy Corps; Save the Children; and the UN World Food Programme. All of these NGOs, and the hundreds of staff who work for them, are doing an excellent job.

We also toured two refugee camps along the Pakistan/Afghanistan border and met with the Pakistan commissioner for Afghan refugees. In addition, we had a meeting with religious leaders of all faiths.

We made the trip for two reasons. First, we wanted to witness first-hand the on-going humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, which some consider the most dire situation in recent history. Almost 4 million Afghans have been uprooted by war and drought. Food and medicine are in short supply, and an entire generation of children knows nothing but war, hunger and despair.

Second, we felt it was important to travel to Afghanistan since we voted to commit U.S. forces to the region. The soldiers, airmen and Marines serving in Afghanistan, and the sailors supporting them at sea, are doing an outstanding job. I am proud of their work in extremely difficult conditions and circumstances. They deserve the nation's thanks and praise. The people of Virginia's 10th Congressional District can be especially proud of their efforts to defeat the scourge of terrorism which claimed the lives of nearly 30 people from the district in the September 11 attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center. In addition, Johnny Micheal Spann, the CIA employee killed November 25 during an uprising of Taliban prisoners being held in Afghanistan, was from Manassas Park.



Rep. Wolf with U.S. Marines at the American Embassy in Kabul.

The State Department officials who are already on the ground in Afghanistan also are doing a tremendous job. As the chairman of the House Appropriations subcommittee that has jurisdiction over the State Department, it was important for me to see the progress they are making in Afghanistan.

AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan is sandwiched between the Middle East, Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent along the ancient "Silk Route." It has long been fought over, despite its rugged and forbidding terrain. Afghanistan was at the center of the so-called "Great Game" in the 19th century when Imperial Russia and the British Empire in India vied for influence. It became a key Cold War battleground after thousands of Soviet troops intervened in 1979 to prop up a pro-communist regime, leading to a major confrontation that drew in the United States and Afghanistan's neighbors.

After the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, the outside world lost interest, and the country descended into civil war. The official government was ousted in 1992 and a new government was never really established, as groups, who were formerly allies against the Soviets, split into several factions, essentially warlords all vying for control of portions of the country. Finally, the Taliban, which originated in



Afghanistan has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world.

Pakistan, swept across most of the country to gain control. While the situation became relatively stable under the Taliban, the regime proved to be one of the harshest and most repressive in modern history. Life under the militant, extremist Islamic Taliban regime permanently scarred the country and its people. The physical and psychological damage will never be forgotten. The Taliban also allowed Osama Bin Laden and the al Qaeda network to operate within Afghanistan.

As the country emerges after the fall of the Taliban, today's realities of life in Afghanistan are shocking. The country suffers from enormous poverty and a crumbling infrastructure. Safety also has been compromised because of widespread land mines. In security briefings before entering the country, we were warned not to venture off any hard road surfaces for fear of mines.

The majority of the Afghan population continues to suffer from woefully inadequate food, clothing, housing and medical care. The life expectancy at birth in Afghanistan is only about 46 years, and the country has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world. More than 250,000 Afghani infants die each year from lack of proper medical care, starvation and disease. Few Afghans can read. The literacy rate is 31 percent. For women, virtually silenced by the Taliban, the literacy rate stands at a dismal 16 percent. Only 2 percent of the population has access to health care. Only 6 percent of the population has access to safe drinking water.

A four-year drought has been especially crippling. In parts of Kandahar and Zabol provinces, three out of four livestock animals already have died, the rain-fed wheat crop is lost and most irrigated wheat fields have failed. Especially alarming are signs that Afghanistan's orchards, which once produced the lion's share of the world's dried fruit and nuts, are dying. If that happens, it will take years before replacement trees can bear fruit.

We were told meteorologists are not predicting any significant changes in the region's weather patterns. Normally at this time of year, Kabul is under several inches of snow. The weather was so unseasonably warm while we were there that soldiers at the Bagram Air Base were working with their shirts off.

Finally, the refugee situation is a continual obstacle to establishing long-term stability. Since 1978, as many as a third of Afghanistan's 26 million inhabitants have been forced to flee their homes, temporarily or permanently. Today, millions still live in squalid refugee camps, either within Afghanistan or in neighboring Pakistan and Iran.



Conditions in refugee camps are grim.

Flying into Afghanistan was majestic. However, the beauty of the snow-capped mountains belie the situation on the ground. Once you land, it doesn't take long to see that the entire country is a war zone. The road to Kabul is littered with hulls of tanks and trucks; some rusted out and remain over a decade after being

destroyed in the war with the Soviets, others recently bombed by U.S. planes. Unexploded ordnance sits randomly on the barren land. The vehicles we traveled in had to ford a small stream because a bridge was taken out by U.S. precision-guided bombs. The destruction in Kabul was extensive. Much of the city was essentially leveled during the war with the Soviet Union.

Misery is commonplace in Kabul. I cannot get the constant sound of coughing out of my mind. Everywhere we went, people were coughing, especially young children, many of whom suffer from an upper respiratory condition. Now every time I hear someone cough, I will think of Afghanistan.

INDIRA GANDHI PEDIATRIC HOSPITAL

Perhaps the most depressing part of our trip was our visit to the Indira Gandhi Pediatric Hospital in Kabul. In all the war-torn and impoverished places I have been in the world — including Chechnya, Bosnia, Ethiopia, Sudan and East Timor — the conditions here were among the worse. The hospital had little to no heat. There was no medicine and few medical instruments. Food was scarce. In one ward room, mothers and their severely malnourished children were two, and sometimes three, to a bed. One in three of the babies in the room died every night. One in three. Some of the babies were laboring just to catch their breath. Others were wailing in pain. Some cried uncontrollably. One child I saw never blinked. It was so sad.



Mother and child at Indira Gandhi Pediatric Hospital in Kabul.

Amazingly, we were told this was the best hospital in Afghanistan. It is hard to imagine anything worse. The hospital is in desperate need of food, medicine and medical equipment. Its doctors have not been paid in more than five months.

DORKHANAI HIGH SCHOOL

The Dorkhanai High School for girls had just reopened a week before we arrived in Afghanistan. The Taliban regime forbid women from going to school. The girls at the school have a great desire to learn, despite the lack of resources and pitiful conditions. The school has no desks; the girls sit on the cold, dirt floor. They have no pens or paper, and few books. One classroom on the second floor had been completely destroyed by a bomb that hit the school during the war with the Soviet Union. Another classroom had a hole in the ceiling from a shell. United Nations' officials estimate that 2,000 schools in Afghanistan have been destroyed by more than 20 years of war.



Afghani girls return to school for the first time in five years.

Education, for both boys and girls, will play a pivotal role in the future of Afghanistan. The children of Afghanistan want to learn, but the task will be daunting. We were told by the minister of education that there are few teachers left in Afghanistan. Most either fled the country or have died, either in the war or as a result of war. Those still alive are now too old to teach. Compounding this is the complete lack of simple resources like pencils and paper. For girls, especially teenagers, the difficulty will be even greater because it has been five years since they have received any formal schooling and trying to catch up will take perseverance under extreme conditions.

Without proper and free public education, Afghanistan will never be able to escape from the abyss. If all that exists — or is allowed to exist — are schools that teach extremism and breed terrorism, we will never win the war on terrorism.

This problem extends to the entire region, especially Pakistan. Often, families faced with no ability to educate their children through any sort of conventional means, resort to the only option available — enrolling their children

in madrassas, or Islamic schools, some of which have been linked to recruiting and training students for militant causes. Sons of poor and desperate families are given food and housing as part of their education. According to recent reports, Pakistan has an estimated 7,000 madrassas with an enrollment of more than 650,000 students.

Many of these madrassas are funded by benefactors outside the region, who, because of various reasons, have an interest in the promotion of militant Islam. The Taliban was an outgrowth of the militant teachings of such madrassas. The madrassas have filled the void of public education and their teachings pose a long-term threat both to the region's stability and U.S. security interests. Madrassas have been characterized by some as jihad, or "holy war," factories. Failure to address this problem immediately, and provide real educational opportunities for both Afghani and Pakistani children, will only further exacerbate these dangers.

ALLAUDIN CENTER ORPHANAGE

There are more than 850 children at the Allaudin Center Orphanage in Kabul. This is the only orphanage in Kabul. It opened after the war with the former Soviet Union. The ages of the children at the orphanage range from 3-17. Most of the children's parents were killed during the war with the Soviets while others were killed during the ensuing civil wars or by the Taliban. Some children were just simply abandoned by their parents.



More than 850 children live at the Allaudin Center Orphanage.

The most striking aspect of the orphanage was the absence of any teenaged girls. No one could explain why. However, the Taliban's insistence that girls above the age of 14 not be with boys or men except in the presence of a male relative is no secret. The boys and young girls were kept on separate sides of the orphanage and did not talk with one other. They also ate in completely separate buildings.

Fire fighters and police officers from New York City visited this orphanage

just before Christmas, bringing desperately needed food, clothing and other supplies. But the needs are so great that the orphanage is still in dire need of pens, paper, toys and sports equipment such as soccer balls and basketballs. It was poignant to see one of the young boys at the orphanage wearing an FDNY baseball hat.

FORMER SOVIET UNION EMBASSY COMPOUND

We also visited the site of the former Soviet Union Embassy compound. It now serves as a makeshift refugee camp for 25,000 Afghans from the Shomali Plain north of Kabul who resisted the Taliban. The Taliban completely destroyed their homeland. The conditions of the camp were extremely grim, and security at the camp remains a major concern.



The former Soviet Embassy compound in Kabul is now a makeshift refugee camp.

A number of multi-story buildings remain on the site, but those left are in extremely poor condition. Exterior walls are gone. There is no electricity or water. Two and three families are living in what were former apartments and offices. Blankets could be seen hanging from lines to provide protection from the elements.

Amazingly, the Russians want the site back by spring. It is unclear what will be done with the thousands of refugees who presently call the compound home.

WOMEN'S BAKERY

One of our final stops in Kabul was to a "Women's Bakery." Inside a dark, damp, mud-walled "bakery," seven to eight women toil seven days a week baking the traditional Afghan bread called nan. It is a flat bread, similar to pita bread.

The fortified wheat for the bread is provided by the World Food Programme. We observed two women who made the dough then carefully weighed it on old metal scales. Four other women rolled it out by hand, forming it like a pizza. Another manned the red-hot wood-burning oven. After it was baked — then cooled — it was taken outside where a group of young children sorted it into piles, wrapped it in cloth then left through an alley to go sell it on the street.

The women in the bakery make \$20 a month, a pricey sum in Afghanistan at the present time. We were told doctors and lawyers have been asking to work in the bakeries because they have not been paid in months.

The support of the World Food Programme is critical to the success of the bakery. Their work, along, with that of the other NGOs in the region, is inspiring.



Children preparing to sell the traditional Afghan bread, “nan.”

CHAIRMAN HAMID KARZAI

We met with Chairman Hamid Karzai, the leader of Afghanistan’s interim government, for more than an hour the first night we were in Afghanistan. I was impressed by him. He seems honest and committed to helping Afghanistan.

He told us his top priority is providing security to the “common man.” Afghanistan is far from being safe. We were told there are no “low risk” areas in Afghanistan and that crime, including robbery and murder, had begun to steadily rise in Kabul.



Afghan women remain afraid to remove their burkas.

Women also remain extremely fearful that the Taliban are still lurking in Kabul. I only saw a few women walking the streets of Kabul without a burka, the sky-blue veil Afghan women wear in public. It covers them from head to toe; they see through a small netting stitched in the front. You can barely see their eyes. The women are afraid that they will be beaten or have acid thrown in their faces if they do not wear their burka. We were told their fathers and husbands are also afraid that their daughters or wives will be beaten or ridiculed for not wearing the burka. Obviously, the psychological scars left by the Taliban are deep.

Chairman Karzai acknowledged the increase in crime and repeatedly stressed that he was committed to improving security. He told us that if the interim government “fails to gain control, we lose everything we already gained.” He said he is working to create a national police force free from corruption and a small national army. Kabul is already operating under a curfew.

Security also is critical to the successful delivery of humanitarian assistance. An effective stabilization force will most likely need to be deployed to ensure security across Afghanistan. Chairman Karzai told us — and it was later reported in the press — that he may ask for outside forces to be brought in to provide security, not only for the Afghan people, but to ensure that humanitarian aid is delivered safely.

Chairman Karzai said his other priorities include providing food and education to all Afghans. He said the country has lost its ability to grow food and educate its children because of the 22 years of war.

He also told us that the new government will be more tolerant of other religions, saying “all Afghans will have his or her complete freedom of religion as Afghan citizens.” He said non-Muslims will be able to practice whatever religion they choose. He also said Heather Mercer was welcome to come back to Afghanistan.

PAKISTAN

Pakistan shares borders with Afghanistan and Iran to the west, China to the north and its rival India to the east. The Arabian Sea is on its southern border. It is a poor, heavily populated country suffering from internal political disputes, lack of foreign investment and heightening tensions with neighboring India.

Pakistan also controls one of the most famous mountain passes in the world — the Khyber Pass. Khyber Pass has a long and often violent history. Its history as a strategic gateway dates from 326 B.C. when Alexander the Great and his army marched through Khyber to reach the great plains of India. In the A.D. 900s, Persian, Mongol and Tartar armies forced their way through Khyber Pass, bringing Islam to India. Centuries later, India became part of the British Empire, and British troops defended the Khyber Pass from the British side. During the Afghan Wars, the pass was the scene of numerous skirmishes between Anglo-Indian soldiers and native Afghans. Particularly well known is the battle of January 1842, in which about 16,000 British and Indian troops were killed.

Pakistan's pursuit of a nuclear program has led to on-again, off-again relations with the United States. The U.S. lifted its most recent sanctions following Pakistan's decision to assist in the global fight against terrorism following the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Indeed, Pakistan has been one of our country's greatest allies in the war against terrorism. Among other things, it has deployed more than 34,000 troops to its 1,500-mile border (the distance from New York City to Texas) with Afghanistan, allowed the U.S. military to control the airspace over a portion of the country, permitted U.S. planes and helicopters to be based in the country, loaned much-needed fuel to our armed



More than 20,000 Afghan refugees live in the Jalozi refugee camp in Pakistan.

forces, and helped capture nearly 250 members of Osama Bin Laden's al Qaeda, terrorist network.

Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf has openly — and at great political risk — committed himself and his country to ending terrorism. In a major address to his nation January on 12, two days after we arrived back in the United States, Musharraf said his country must rid itself of religious extremists and groups that export terrorism. He banned five Islamic militant organizations and is attempting to reassert the government's role in education by tightly regulating the madrassas that have filled the void of public education with Islamic militancy.

Despite General Mursharraf's desire to crack down on terrorism, war clouds of an even more ominous nature are looming over Pakistan, which is the second largest Islamic nation in the world. India blames Pakistan-based Islamic terrorist groups for several recent attacks, including an assault on the Indian Parliament on December 13, 2001. Tensions have been on the rise ever since, with both sides massing forces along their respective borders. War is nothing new to either country; they fought each other in 1945, 1965 and 1971. The stakes are higher this time, however, because both sides have nuclear weapons. We were told on more than one occasion that if war were to break out, it would not take much for Pakistan to consider using nuclear weapons since their army and other resources pale in comparison to India's. That is frightening.

The United States' efforts in Afghanistan could be severely threatened by the escalating tensions. We were told by Pakistani officials that if war with India breaks out, Pakistan will immediately redeploy the troops guarding its border with Afghanistan to its border with India on the east. Pakistan also would take back control of its airfields and airspace, and any logistical support for U.S. forces would evaporate.

Clearly, it is in the United States' — and the world's — best interests for the present situation between Pakistan and India to be resolved peacefully, and immediately. The United States should continue to do everything possible to help bring about peace. If war were to break out between the two nations, the results could be calamitous.

In addition to meeting with a number of Pakistani officials, including

General Mursharraf, we visited two refugee camps along the Afghanistan/Pakistan border and the World Food Programme's warehouse and food distribution compound capital of Pakistan.

We were told that there are between 2 million and 3 million Afghan refugees living in approximately 114 camps scattered throughout Pakistan. (There are an additional 1.5 million refugees in Iran.) Some have been there for more than 20 years and now have children who have never been to Afghanistan. They left Afghanistan for several reasons: the war with the Soviet Union; to escape from civil unrest and the oppressive Taliban regime; and fear of the current fighting in their homeland. We were told that since September 11, more than 140,000 Afghans have come, many by foot, to Pakistan.



Between 2 million and 3 million Afghans presently live in refugee camps scattered throughout Pakistan.

from Afghanistan. No running water. No electricity. No medicine. Little food. I asked one mother if she ever planned to return to Afghanistan. Her response was that there was nothing to return to. Another mother, who traveled hundreds of miles by car and by foot to get to the camp, was spinning wool by hand to make money. Her infant daughter lay ill in the back of the tent.

One of the camps we visited, Jalozei, was one of the worst refugee camps I have ever been in. It was established shortly after September 11 and there are about 20,000 refugees living there. It was grim. There were tents and other makeshift shelters as far as the eye could see. Six and seven people live in each tent with the last of their worldly possessions that they carried on their backs

The other camp we visited, Shamshatoo, was a vast improvement over Jalozei. About a 20-minute drive from Jalozei, it was established in November 2000 and is home to approximately 53,000 refugees. The refugees had built mud homes and were selling vegetables and other goods from makeshift stores. It has a medical clinic, complete with a birthing room and nursery, school and even a playground. It is amazing how resilient — and resourceful — they are.

CONCLUSION

The situation in Afghanistan is desperate. There is no other way to describe it. The country is facing a long and difficult road to recovery. I do not know whether to be optimistic or pessimistic. People I have talked to — government officials, journalists, NGOs assisting in the region and others with much greater knowledge of the country than I — are leery to give me a prediction as to the future of the country.

While I have confidence in Chairman Hamid Karzai, the leader of the interim government, I am not sure about some of the other officials who have been selected to serve in the government. I am fearful that some may try to undercut Chairman Karzai for their own political gain. I also am distressed by the recent reports of the release of high-level leaders of the Taliban.

Something also must be done to rein in the remaining warlords who hold power in different provinces around the country. By extension, other states in the region should refrain from destabilizing Chairman Karzai's interim government by supporting regional warlords bent on subverting any centralized authority. In order for Afghanistan to succeed, it must first be united. The warlords cannot continue to rule by the gun.

The ongoing drought only exacerbates the problem. Regrettably, there is no relief in sight. Afghans are proud people. They do not want handouts. They want to be self sufficient. I was amazed by the level of business being conducted on the streets of Kabul. The city was very much alive, but if the drought continues, the situation will only continue to deteriorate.

The West has a responsibility to help Afghanistan and Pakistan. The two are tied together. Both will either succeed — or fail — together. They are like bookends. The Afghans feel like the West abandoned them after the war with the



Education will play a pivotal role in the future of Afghanistan.

Soviet Union. That can't happen again. The West has to help rebuild Afghanistan. Some don't like the idea of "nation building," but some sort of plan is going to have to be developed to help guide Afghanistan. Whether it is a partnership where the West sends in the best and brightest minds in government and business or something like the Marshall Plan used to rebuild Europe after World War II, something must be done. If not, we will wind up right back where we were prior to September 11, with extremists controlling the country and terrorists being trained to kill innocent people throughout the world. Too much is at stake to walk away a second time.

It is imperative that the West help ensure the security of the country — and the region — and help with the education of the population, both young and old. Education, in my opinion, will be key. Without it, Afghanistan is destined to fail.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ! The issue of security in Afghanistan has to be dealt with immediately. The country is still not safe. Interim Chairman Hamid Karzai's number one priority is providing security to the "common man." We were told there are no low risk areas in the entire country. Crime in Kabul — banditry and murder — is on the rise. Chairman Karzai told us — and it was later reported in the press — that he may ask for outside forces to be brought in to provide security, not only for the Afghan people, but to ensure that humanitarian aid is delivered safely. The Afghan government is going to need help building its own army that is loyal to the central government and a police corps to help maintain order. An effective stabilization force will most likely need to be deployed for a period of time to ensure security across Afghanistan.

- ! The Bush Administration is working diligently to help ease tensions between Pakistan and India, and I support that effort. The threat of nuclear war and the potential negative impact a war in the region would have on the United States' war on terrorism demands immediate action. If the Administration thinks it would be helpful, perhaps an individual with direct access to President Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell could be assigned as a special envoy to the region to help broker a peaceful solution.

- ! We need to immediately restore the AID (Agency for International Development) mission in Pakistan and Afghanistan. AID is critical to countries such as Pakistan and Afghanistan to help prevent a return to extremism.

- ! We must do whatever is necessary to defeat terrorism, which means the West also has a responsibility to assist both Afghanistan and Pakistan. The war on terrorism is not a conventional war. It is not only a military fight, it also is about the economic, cultural and educational futures of these two countries. Afghanistan and Pakistan are like bookends. Whatever happens in one country affects the other. I believe the West abandoned Afghanistan after it defeated the former Soviet Union, and it became a fertile ground for the rise of the Taliban. We cannot walk away again. If we do, we will end up right back where we are today, and extremists like the Taliban could return to power.

- ! I encourage as many officials as possible to go to Afghanistan to witness first-hand the despair, the starvation and the devastation, all the result of:
 - ! 10 years of war with the Soviets
 - ! civil war
 - ! the oppressive rule of the Taliban
 - ! four years of drought

- ! While substantial resources are required immediately, more will be required later, in a phased and reliable manner. Therefore, long-term multi-year funding for development must be secured. Funding for Afghanistan should be in addition to what is already available and not detract from development and humanitarian assistance to other parts of the world.

- ! Congress, to the extent possible, should work to ensure that money pouring into Afghanistan is being spent wisely. I am concerned that there will be corruption if tight controls are not in place. While we were in Afghanistan, questions were already being raised as to whether or not money is getting to where it is needed.

- ! We should continue to encourage and promote cooperation among the states in the region which share an interest in the stability of Afghanistan.
- ! Additional FBI agents and resources should be sent immediately to Pakistan to help in the crackdown on terrorist organizations.
- ! Efforts to put an end to Afghanistan's role in the drug trade must be stepped up. Ironically, the cultivation of opium was banned under the Taliban but was never strictly enforced. In fact, the Taliban earned revenue from levies on drug shipments. I have heard numerous reports of farmers already planting poppy for harvesting this spring. Regrettably, for many Afghani farmers, growing opium is the only way of making a living. These farmers need assistance in learning about irrigation and crop rotation in order to grow food instead of drugs.
- ! "People-to-People" diplomacy — without U.S. aid funds — will be critical to the future of Afghanistan. Civic organizations such as Rotary Club International, Kiwanis and Lions Club should be encouraged to take on projects to provide assistance. Hospitals should donate medicines, equipment and other materials. American schools should consider adopting schools in Afghanistan to provide pens, paper and other supplies. American colleges and universities also should work to develop relationships and exchange programs. The U.S. business community can provide assistance, both technical and financial. It is important that the Afghani people see involvement from the American people themselves.
- ! Hopefully the Afghan community in the United States — and in Western countries — will be very involved. They should provide whatever assistance they can, whether it be financial, technical or some other avenue of support. There are a number of stories we heard of Afghans returning to their homeland to help. The new minister of higher education, Dr. Sharif Faez, is from Ashburn, Virginia.
- ! The American flag should be imprinted on all U.S. humanitarian assistance, such as bags of food aid. Many in Afghanistan cannot read, but they recognize — and know — the American flag. People around the world recognize that the American flag is a symbol of freedom. Other countries,

such as Japan, have their flags printed on their aid shipments. We should do the same. Immediately. This practice should be followed on all U.S. aid delivered throughout the world.

- ! The State Department and Marine Corps should continue to take steps to improve the living conditions at the Embassy in Kabul. State Department officials serving in Afghanistan and the highly motivated and extremely dedicated U.S. Marines guarding the Embassy are doing an outstanding job under very difficult circumstances. They are deserving of special recognition. The State Department and the Marine Corps also should attempt to provide greater access to the Internet for the personnel serving at the Embassy. It will greatly improve morale.

In closing, I want to once again acknowledge and salute the thousands of men and women serving in our nation's armed forces in Afghanistan and around the world. They are doing an outstanding job. I also want to salute the State Department personnel both in Afghanistan and Pakistan and here in the United States who are working so hard — some under extremely trying conditions — to improve the situation in region. They all deserve our special thanks and praise.

I want to thank all the NGOs — the World Food Programme in particular — working in the region for the job they do. They really make a huge difference and are rarely recognized for their unselfish and untiring acts of kindness, compassion and sheer commitment to making the world a better place.

I also want to thank U.S. Ambassador Wendy Chamberlin and her fine staff at the U.S. Embassy in Pakistan for the work they do. Tom Huskek, the Embassy's refugee coordinator, deserves special thanks for helping to make our trip a success. Elizabeth Horst, Don Jurczyk and Barbara Martin also deserve special recognition.

Finally, I want to thank my chief of staff, Dan Scandling, who accompanied me and photographed and videotaped our trip, and the staff of Reps. Hall and Pitts, especially Rick Carne and Karin Finkler, for all the work they did in putting together the trip and helping prepare this report.