

**Statement of Congressman Dana Rohrabacher**  
**U.S. Policy Toward Afghanistan**  
**Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on South Asia**  
April 14, 1999

Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for allowing me to testify this morning. This hearing is especially significant, because beyond the important matters of human rights violations, especially against women, terrorism and drug proliferation, what transpires in Afghanistan today will have a profound impact on the entire region of Central Asia for years to come.

I have been involved with Afghanistan since the early 1980s when I worked in the White House as a speech writer and special assistant to President Ronald Reagan. In 1988, immediately after I was elected to Congress I traveled into Afghanistan with mujahideen fighters and participated in the battle of Jalalabad against the Soviets. At that time I learned first hand of the courage and generosity of the Afghan people. I also learned from the Afghans that I traveled with and the villagers that housed me that the average Afghan is not a fanatic or a religious extremist, but to the contrary, very hospitable and generous, by the very essence of their traditional culture. What has happened during the past few years under Taliban rule is a tragic perversion of Afghan culture and religious heritage.

Having been closely involved in US policy toward Afghanistan for some twenty years, I have called into question whether or not this administration has a covert policy that has empowered the Taliban and enabled this brutal movement to hold on to power. Even though the President and the Secretary of State have voiced their disgust at the brutal policies of the Taliban, especially their repression of women, the actual implementation of U.S. policy has repeatedly had the opposite effect. I base this claim on the following reasons:

\*In 1996, the Taliban first emerged as a mysterious force that swept out of so-called religious schools in Pakistan to a blitzkrieg type of conquest of most of Afghanistan against some very seasoned former-mujahideen fighters. As a so-called "student militia," the Taliban could not have succeeded without the support, organization and logistics of military professionals, who would not have been faculty in religious schools.

\*The US has a very close relationship with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, in matters concerning Afghanistan, but unfortunately, instead of providing leadership, we are letting them lead our policy. This began during the Afghan war against the Soviets. I witnessed this in the White House when U.S. officials in charge of the military aid program to the mujahideen permitted a large percentage of our assistance to be channeled to the most anti-western non-democratic elements of the mujahideen, such as Golbodin Hekmatayar. This was done to placate the Pakistan ISI military intelligence.

\*In 1997, responding to the pleas of the Afghan-American community and the recognized Afghanistan ambassador, I led an effort to stop the State Department from permitting the Afghanistan embassy in Washington from being taken under the control of a diplomat loyal to the Taliban. Instead, of permitting a new ambassador who was assigned by the non-Taliban Afghan government that is still recognized at the United Nations, the State Department claimed "we don't take sides," and forced the embassy to be closed against the will of the Afghanistan United Nations office.

\*During late 1997 and early 1998, while the Taliban imposed a blockade on more than two million people of the Hazara ethnic group in central Afghanistan, putting tens of thousands at risk of starving to death or perishing from a lack of medicine during the harsh winter months, the State Department undercut my efforts to send in two plane loads of medicines by the Americares and

the Knightsbridge relief agencies. State Department representatives made false statements that the humanitarian crisis was exaggerated and there was already sufficient medical supplies in the blockaded area. When the relief teams risked their lives to go into the area with the medicines - without the support of the State Department they found the hospitals and clinics did not have even aspirins or bandages, no generators for heat in sub-zero weather, a serious lack of blankets and scant amounts of food. The State Department, in effect, was assisting the Taliban's inhuman blockade intended to starve out communities that opposed their dictates.

\* Perhaps the most glaring evidence of this administration's tacit support of the was the effort made during a Spring 1998 visit to Afghanistan by Mr. Indefurth and U.N. Ambassador Bill Richardson. These administration representatives convinced the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance not to go on the offensive against a then-weakened and vulnerable Taliban. And instead convinced these anti-Taliban leaders to accept a cease-fire that was proposed by Pakistan. The cease fire lasted only as long as it took the Paks to resupply and reorganize the Taliban. In fact, within a few months of announcement of the U.S.-backed "Ulema" process, the Taliban, freshly supplied by the ISI and flush with drug money, went on a major offensive and destroyed the Northern Alliance. This was either incompetence on the part of the State Department and U.S. intelligence agencies or indicative of the real policy of our government to ensure a Taliban victory.

\*Can anyone believe that with the Taliban, identified by the United Nations and the DEA as one of the two largest producers of opium in the world, that they weren't being closely monitored by our intelligence services, who would have seen every move of the military build up that the Pakistanis and Taliban were undertaking. In addition, at the same time the U.S. was planning its strike against the terrorist camps of Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan. How could our intelligence services not have known that Osama bin Laden's forces had moved north to lead the Taliban offensive, where horrendous brutality took place.

\*In addition, there has been no major effort to end the flow of opium out of Afghanistan, which is the main source of the revenues that enables the Taliban to maintain control of the country, even though the US Government observes by satellite where the opium is grown.

\* I am making the claim that there is and has been and is a covert policy by this administration to support the Taliban movement's control of Afghanistan. It is my guess, that this amoral or immoral policy is based on the assumption that the Taliban would bring stability to Afghanistan and permit the building of oil pipelines from Central Asia through Afghanistan to Pakistan.

We have a choice between believing that this administration's policy toward Afghanistan has been incompetent beyond belief, or is directed toward achieving a covert purpose.

I believe the administration has maintained this covert goal and kept the Congress in the dark about its policy of supporting the Taliban, the most anti-Western, anti-female, anti-human rights regime in the world. It doesn't take a genius to understand that this policy would outrage the American people, especially America's women.

Perhaps the most glaring evidence of our government's covert policy to favor the Taliban is that the administration is currently engaged in a major effort to obstruct the Congress from determining the details behind this policy. Last year in August, after several unofficial requests were made of State Department, I made an official request for all diplomatic documents concerning US policy toward the Taliban, especially those cables and documents from our embassies in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. As a senior Member of the House International Relations Committee I have oversight responsibility in this area.

In November, after months of stonewalling, the Secretary of State herself promised before the International Relations Committee that the documents would be forthcoming. She reconfirmed that promise in February when she testified before our Committee on the State Department budget. The Chairman of the Committee, Ben Gilman, added his voice to the record in support of

my document request. To this time, we have received nothing. There can only be two explanations. Either the State Department is totally incompetent, or there is an ongoing cover-up of State Department's true fundamental policy toward Afghanistan. You probably didn't expect me to praise the State Department at the end of this scathing testimony. But I will. I don't think the State Department is incompetent. They should be held responsible for their policies and the American people should know, through documented proof, what they are doing.