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September 9, 2008

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Robert Gates
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretaries Rice and Gates:

During this pivotal time in Pakistan's history – and, by extension, this pivotal time for our own national security interests that are closely linked to Pakistan – I again request that you provide me with a full update on your most current military and diplomatic strategy for ensuring that al Qaeda is properly targeted and eliminated, if possible, within the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

For nearly seven years since September 11, 2001, the Administration undertook a strategy of supporting former President Pervez Musharraf's government with billions of dollars in primarily military aid in the hopes that his military would effectively destroy the al Qaeda central command. Unfortunately this approach seems to have failed, according to information from intelligence reports indicating that Osama bin Laden and his organization are operating in a safe haven within the FATA at pre-9/11 levels of strength and capability.

As you know, I have been raising questions about the direction of our strategy for Pakistan, both in written correspondence to you and in hearings I convened within the Foreign Relations subcommittee that I chair. Your departments' responses have been disappointingly thin and devoid of detail. This weak response, coupled with a Government Accountability Office report released in April, would lead most observers to the conclusion that, in fact, we have had no strategy to effectively target al Qaeda.

The developments of the past few days, weeks and months have again brought Pakistan's security situation into focus for the public at large. The departure of former President Musharraf along with new President Asif Ali Zardari's rise to power certainly serve as additional reminders that we are now dealing with a different government in Islamabad. Furthermore, last week marked the first reported U.S. ground offensive against militants within Pakistan's borders. That, combined with continued remote air strikes inside of Pakistan, certainly would suggest that we

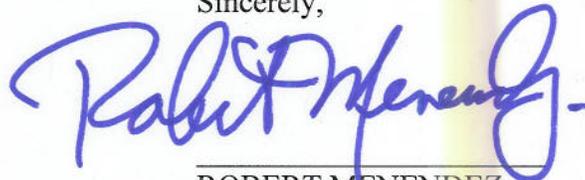
may be using new tactics in the fight against al Qaeda and have perhaps ceased to wait for Pakistan's military to do the job.

The fight against al Qaeda in the FATA region is as vital to our national security as any, and as such, we in Congress need full information on the current strategy and whatever progress it may be making. As the chair of the subcommittee with jurisdiction over foreign assistance programs, I am also interested in any changes to our aid programs and how they fit with new tactics we may be using to target terrorist groups.

To this point, your departments have been less than forthcoming, but if we are to ensure that we are following a course that makes our nation the safest it can be, it is imperative that you provide us with details. Absent this information, we are left to judge the success of our seven-year long efforts by the facts at hand: despite more than \$11 billion in aid from American taxpayers, al Qaeda has been allowed to regroup in a safe zone along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

I look forward to your response and the information I seek.

Sincerely,



ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senator