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Report to Congressional Requesters

April 2008

COMBATING TERRORISM

The United States Lacks Comprehensive Plan to Destroy the Terrorist Threat and Close the Safe Haven in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas

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Highlights

Highlights of GAO-08-622, a report to congressional requesters

COMBATING TERRORISM

The United States Lacks Comprehensive Plan to Destroy the Terrorist Threat and Close the Safe Haven in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas

Why GAO Did This Study

Since 2002, destroying the terrorist threat and closing the terrorist safe haven have been key national security goals. The United States has provided Pakistan, a key ally in the war on terror, more than $10.5 billion for military, economic, and development activities. Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), which border Afghanistan, are vast unpoliced regions attractive to extremists and terrorists seeking a safe haven.

GAO was asked to assess (1) the progress in meeting these national security goals for Pakistan's FATA, and (2) the status of U.S. efforts to develop a comprehensive plan for the FATA. To address these objectives, GAO compared national security goals against assessments conducted by U.S. agencies and reviewed available plans.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the National Security Advisor and the Director of the NCTC, in consultation with the Secretaries of Defense and State and others, implement the congressional mandate to develop a comprehensive plan to combat the terrorist threat and close the safe haven in the FATA. Defense and USAID concurred with the recommendation; State asserted that a comprehensive strategy exists, while the Office of the Director of National Intelligence stated that plans to combat terrorism exist. In GAO's view, these plans have not been formally integrated into a comprehensive plan as called for by Congress. The NSC provided no comments.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on GAO-08-622. For more information, contact Charles Michael Johnson Jr. at (202) 512-7331 or johnsoncm@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

The United States has not met its national security goals to destroy terrorist threats and close the safe haven in Pakistan's FATA. Since 2002, the United States relied principally on the Pakistan military to address U.S. national security goals. Of the approximately $5.8 billion the United States provided for efforts in the FATA and border region from 2002 through 2007, about 96 percent reimbursed Pakistan for military operations there. According to the Department of State, Pakistan deployed 120,000 military and paramilitary forces in the FATA and helped kill and capture hundreds of suspected al Qaeda operatives; these efforts cost the lives of approximately 1,400 members of Pakistan's security forces. However, GAO found broad agreement, as documented in the National Intelligence Estimate, State, and embassy documents, as well as Defense officials in Pakistan, that al Qaeda had regenerated its ability to attack the United States and had succeeded in establishing a safe haven in Pakistan's FATA.

No comprehensive plan for meeting U.S. national security goals in the FATA has been developed, as stipulated by the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (2003), called for by an independent commission (2004), and mandated by congressional legislation (2007). Furthermore, Congress created the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) in 2004 specifically to develop comprehensive plans to combat terrorism. However, neither the National Security Council (NSC), NCTC, nor other executive branch departments have developed a comprehensive plan that includes all elements of national power—diplomatic, military, intelligence, development assistance, economic, and law enforcement support—called for by the various national security strategies and Congress. As a result, since 2002, the U.S. embassy in Pakistan has had no Washington-supported, comprehensive plan to combat terrorism and close the terrorist safe haven in the FATA. In 2006, the embassy, in conjunction with Defense, State, and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and in cooperation with the government of Pakistan, began an effort to focus more attention on other key elements of national power, such as development assistance and public diplomacy, to address U.S. goals in the FATA. However, this does not yet constitute a comprehensive plan.

Sources: GAO; USAID and Map Resources (maps).

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Abbreviations

CENTCOM	U.S. Central Command
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CSF	Coalition Support Funds
Defense	Department of Defense
DNI	Director of National Intelligence
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FCR	Frontier Crimes Regulations
NIE	National Intelligence Estimate
NCTC	National Counterterrorism Center
NSC	National Security Council
ODNI	Office of the Director of National Intelligence
State	Department of State
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

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United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

April 17, 2008

Congressional Requesters:

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 were planned from an Afghan safe haven, and many of the terrorists who attacked the United States used Pakistan as the main route to travel from Afghanistan to the United States. Since the 9/11 attacks in 2001, the administration and Congress have repeatedly stated that destroying terrorist threats and closing terrorist safe havens are the nation's critical national security goals.[1] As such, the United States has provided Pakistan, which has become a key U.S. ally in the global war on terror, with more than $10.5 billion for military, economic, and development activities in support of these goals. The 9/11 Commission, an independent, bipartisan commission created by congressional legislation in late 2002, concluded in 2004 that it is hard to overstate the importance of Pakistan in the struggle against Islamist terrorism. The commission found that the country's vast unpoliced regions have made it attractive to extremists seeking a safe haven and have reportedly provided a base for terrorist operations against U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan. Following the defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan, al Qaeda and Taliban fighters are believed to have retreated across the Afghan border and into Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in an effort to re-establish a terrorist safe haven.

Because of the challenges the United States faces in Pakistan in meeting its goals to destroy the terrorist threats and close the terrorist safe haven, we were asked to assess (1) U.S. progress in meeting its national security goals in Pakistan's FATA region, and (2) the status of U.S. efforts to develop a comprehensive plan for the FATA.

This report is the first in a series of reports we plan to issue in response to your interest in U.S. support of the Pakistani government's efforts in the FATA region bordering Afghanistan. We plan to issue an interim product on the use and oversight of Coalition Support Funds (CSF) in May 2008

[1]These goals have been set forth in the 2002 *National Security Strategy*, the 2003 *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, the 2004 *9/11 Commission Report*, and endorsed by the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (P.L. 108-458, sec 7102 (b)(3)) and the Implementing the Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007 (P.L. 110-53, sec. 2042(b)(2)).

and a report on CSF in the summer of 2008, followed by a broader report covering security, political, and development assistance activities undertaken by the United States to meet U.S. national security goals in the FATA.

To address our objectives, we reviewed relevant national security strategies, the *9/11 Commission Report*, key congressional legislation, and related documentation from the Departments of Defense (Defense) and State (State) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and discussed these issues with relevant department officials in Washington, D.C. We also interviewed Defense officials operating out of the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) headquarters in Tampa, Florida. We requested meetings with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), and the National Security Council (NSC); however, only the CIA agreed to meet with us. To determine progress in meeting national security objectives, we compared the national security goals stated in strategic documents with unclassified assessments conducted by the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), State, and U.S. officials operating in Pakistan. To determine if comprehensive plans were developed and contained the elements recommended by national security documents, legislation, and GAO, we requested all plans addressing U.S. efforts in the FATA from the CIA, Defense, NCTC, NSC, State, USAID, and the U.S. Embassy in Pakistan. CIA, NCTC, and NSC did not provide any plans. We reviewed all plans provided by Defense, State, and USAID, as of April 17, 2008. We also met with members of the International Crisis Group in Washington, including the director of their office in Pakistan.[2] In addition, we conducted field work in Pakistan, where we met with officials from the U.S. embassy and Pakistan's Ministries of Defense and Interior, as well as international donors from Canada, Japan, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. We visited Peshawar, near the FATA, to conduct discussions with the U.S. consulate, Pakistan's 11th Army Corps, the Frontier Corps, the FATA Secretariat and Development Authority, and a Pakistani nongovernmental organization with experience working in the FATA. We determined the amount of U.S. funding to Pakistan by analyzing Defense, State, and USAID budget documents covering the period from fiscal years 2002 through 2007 and by verifying the amounts used for the FATA and the

[2]The International Crisis Group is an independent, nonpartisan source of analysis on the prevention and resolution of global conflicts.

border regions through discussions with agency officials. This analysis does not include funding for covert activities in Pakistan.

We conducted this performance audit from July 2007 through April 2008 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Results in Brief

The United States has not met its national security goals to destroy the terrorist threat and close the safe haven in Pakistan's FATA region. Since 2002, the United States has relied principally on the Pakistani military to address its national security goals. There have been limited efforts, however, to address other underlying causes of terrorism in the FATA by providing development assistance or by addressing the FATA's political needs. Of the over $10.5 billion that the United States has provided to Pakistan from 2002 through 2007, we identified about $5.8 billion specifically for Pakistan's FATA and border region; about 96 percent of this funding reimbursed Pakistan for military operations in the FATA and the border region. According to Defense and State Department officials, Pakistan deployed up to 120,000 military and paramilitary forces in the FATA and killed and captured hundreds of suspected al Qaeda operatives. In October 2007, State reported that it had determined that Pakistan was making "significant" progress toward eliminating the safe haven in the FATA. However, we found broad agreement, as documented in the unclassified 2007 *National Intelligence Estimate* (NIE), State and embassy documents, as well as among Defense, State, and other officials, including those operating in Pakistan, that al Qaeda had regenerated its ability to attack the United States and had succeeded in establishing a safe haven in Pakistan's FATA.

No comprehensive plan for meeting U.S. national security goals in the FATA has been developed, as stipulated by the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, recommended by the independent 9/11

Commission, and mandated by congressional legislation.[3] Since 2003, the administration's national security strategies and Congress have recognized that a comprehensive plan that includes all elements of national power—diplomatic, military, intelligence, development assistance, economic, and law enforcement support—was needed to address the terrorist threat emanating from the FATA. Furthermore, in 2004, a provision of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (Intelligence Reform Act) established the NCTC to develop comprehensive plans to combat terrorism that included clear objectives, the assignment of tasks among executive branch departments, and interagency coordination. We have previously reported on the need for these and other elements to enhance interagency cooperation and improve effectiveness.[4] The NCTC also was tasked with monitoring each department's efforts. However, neither the NCTC, the NSC, nor the other executive branch departments have developed a comprehensive plan that integrates the capabilities of the executive agencies and the intelligence community. As a result, since 2002, the embassy has had no Washington-supported, comprehensive plan to combat terrorists and close the terrorist safe haven in the FATA. In 2006, the U.S. government, in conjunction with the government of Pakistan, began an effort to focus more attention on other key elements of national power, such as development and public diplomacy, to address U.S. goals in the FATA. In support of this effort, Defense, State, and USAID began to develop department-specific plans and hold interagency meetings to address security and development issues in the FATA. However, this effort has not yet resulted in a comprehensive plan. As of April 2008, not all of these efforts have been approved in Washington, funding shortfalls

[3]The administration's 2003 *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, the independent *9/11 Commission Report*, and Congress's (1) Intelligence Reform Act and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (P.L. 108-458, sec. 7120) and (2) the Implementing the Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007 (P.L. 110-53, sec. 2042 (c)) all support the development of a comprehensive plan that uses all elements of national power.

[4]We reported that strategic plans should clearly define objectives to be accomplished, identify the roles and responsibilities for meeting each objective, ensure that funding necessary to achieve the objectives is available, and employ monitoring mechanisms to determine progress and identify needed improvements. See GAO, *Combating Terrorism: Law Enforcement Agencies Lack Directives to Assist Foreign Nations to Identify, Disrupt, and Prosecute Terrorists*, GAO-07-697 (Washington, D.C.: May 25, 2007); GAO, *Results-Oriented Government: Practices That Can Help Enhance and Sustain Collaboration among Federal Agencies*, GAO-06-15 (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 21, 2005); and GAO, *Combating Terrorism: Observations on National Strategies Related to Terrorism*, GAO-03-519T (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 3, 2003).

exist, and support from the recently elected government of Pakistan is unknown.[5]

We are recommending that the National Security Advisor and the Director of the NCTC, in consultation with the Secretaries of Defense and State, the Administrator of USAID, the intelligence community, and other executive departments as deemed appropriate, work to develop a comprehensive plan using all elements of national power to combat the terrorist threat and close the associated safe haven in Pakistan's FATA region. The comprehensive plan should also include key components called for in the Intelligence Reform Act and components that we have previously reported as being needed to improve the effectiveness of plans involving multidepartmental efforts to combat terrorism.

State, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), Defense, and USAID provided written comments on a draft of this report, which are reproduced in appendixes I, II, III, and IV.

State and ODNI did not comment on our recommendation, while Defense and USAID concurred. In general, they all commented on their individual planning efforts and interagency meetings to coordinate these efforts that began in 2006. This, however, was not the focus of our review; our report assessed whether a comprehensive plan had been developed that incorporated all elements of national power.

State's comments asserted that embassy and U.S. government efforts to date have resulted in a comprehensive strategy. We disagree, and note in our report that while the initiatives begun by Defense, State, and USAID are being coordinated by the embassy, they have not been fully approved or integrated into a formal, comprehensive plan.

ODNI's comments stated that they agreed with our finding that the United States had not met its national security goals in Pakistan's FATA; however, they disagreed that the United States lacks plans to combat terrorism. Our report does not state that the U.S. lacks agency-specific plans; rather, we found that there was no comprehensive plan that integrated the combined capabilities of Defense, State, USAID, the intelligence community, and

[5]We will continue to monitor the status and progress of the U.S. government's effort in the FATA and report on the matter in a subsequent report.

others, as called for by the 2003 national security strategy, the 9/11 Commission report, and Congress.

We also received technical comments from Defense and USAID, which we have incorporated throughout the report where appropriate.

Background

The FATA is mountainous and shares a 373-mile border with Afghanistan known as the Durand Line (see fig. 1). The FATA, which has a population of 3.1 million people, is one of Pakistan's poorest regions, with high poverty, high unemployment, and an underdeveloped infrastructure. Most of the population depends on subsistence agriculture. The FATA's per capita income is $250 per year, which is half of the national per capita income; about 60 percent of the population lives below the national poverty line. Per capita public development expenditure is reportedly one-third of the national average. Social development indicators are also poor. The overall literacy rate is 17 percent, compared with 56 percent nationally, with male literacy at 29 percent and female literacy at 3 percent. The FATA has just 41 hospitals for its population of 3.1 million, and a doctor to population ratio of 1 to 6,762.

Figure 1: Map of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Pakistan

Sources: GAO; USAID and Map Resources (maps).

The FATA is governed by an administrative system and a judicial system different from the rest of Pakistan—the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) of 1901, codified under British rule.[6] Because Pakistan retained the colonial administrative and legal structures of the British, as codified in the FCR, the FATA populations are legally separate from and unequal to other Pakistani citizens. Examples of these differences under the FCR follow:

- FATA residents do not have access to national political parties, and political parties are forbidden from extending their activities into the agencies of FATA.
- The FATA is under the direct executive authority of the President of Pakistan. Laws framed by the National Assembly of Pakistan do not apply in the FATA unless so ordered by the President, who is empowered to issue regulations for the tribal areas.
- FATA residents do not have the right to legal representation, to present material evidence, or to cross-examine witnesses in Pakistan's judicial system. Those convicted are denied the right of appeal in Pakistan's courts.
- The President's representatives to the FATA, who are called political agents, can punish an entire tribe for crimes committed on the tribe's territory by issuing fines, making arrests, implementing property seizures, and establishing blockades.

In response to the draft, Defense noted that the FCR is a culturally acceptable recognition of the tribal structure of the FATA, where the population is ethnically different from the majority of Pakistan's citizens, and precludes forced assimilation. Further, Defense noted that removing the FCR without a replacement mechanism that is accepted by the indigenous population has the potential to create a vacuum that could result in negative consequences. A recent announcement by Pakistani Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani regarding the repeal of the FCR drew mixed reactions from tribesmen and political leaders, some of whom called for amendments to the FCR, rather than its repeal.

[6]The information on foreign law in this report does not reflect our independent legal analysis but is based on interviews and secondary sources.

The U.S. Government Has Not Met National Security Goals in Pakistan's FATA

The United States has not met its national security goals to destroy the terrorist threat and close the safe haven in the FATA, despite more than $10.5 billion in U.S. support to Pakistan since 2002. Various national security strategies have called for the use of all elements of national power, such as diplomatic, military, intelligence, development assistance, economic, and law enforcement support, to meet these goals; however, the United States has relied principally on supporting the Pakistani military to meet these goals. According to Defense and State, the Pakistani government deployed up to 120,000 military and paramilitary forces to combat terrorism in the FATA. Despite this effort, the 2007 NIE, State and embassy documents, and Defense and State officials, including those operating in Pakistan, have concluded that al Qaeda has regenerated its ability to attack the United States and succeeded in establishing a safe haven in Pakistan's FATA.

Although State Has Reported Some Progress in Pakistan's FATA, Other Sources Indicate Resurgence of an al Qaeda Threat and the Establishment of a Terrorist Safe Haven in the FATA

On October 1, 2007, State provided Congress with a report in response to a requirement in the Implementation of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007 (9/11 Commission Act).[7] The report stated that it had determined that Pakistan was (1) committed to eliminating from Pakistani territory any organization, such as the Taliban, al Qaeda, or any successor engaged in military, insurgent, or terrorist activities in Afghanistan; (2) undertaking a comprehensive military, legal, economic, and political campaign to achieve the goal described; and (3) making demonstrated, significant, and sustained progress toward eliminating support or safe havens for terrorists. Notwithstanding State's report to Congress, we found broad agreement that al Qaeda had established a safe haven in the FATA and reconstituted its attack capability. In particular, the unclassified versions of the 2007 NIE and 2008 *Annual Threat Assessment* state that al Qaeda has regenerated its attack capability and secured a safe haven in Pakistan's FATA.[8] These conclusions are supported by a broad array of sources, including Defense, State, and senior U.S. embassy officials in Pakistan.

The NIE and other sources have found that al Qaeda has established a safe haven in Pakistan. The DNI's 2008 assessment stated that the safe haven in

[7]P.L. 110-53, sec. 2042(d), Aug. 3, 2007.

[8]The DNI's 2007 NIE and its 2008 *Annual Threat Assessment* are designed to help U.S. civilian and military leaders develop policies to protect U.S. national security interests and represent the combined judgments of 16 U.S. intelligence agencies, according to the NIE.

Pakistan provides al Qaeda with many of the same advantages it had when it was based across the border in Afghanistan. According to the assessment, the safe haven in the FATA serves as a staging area for al Qaeda's attacks in support of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Further, it serves as a location for training new terrorist operatives for attacks in Pakistan, the Middle East, Africa, Europe, and the United States. U.S. government officials in Washington and Pakistan also acknowledge that al Qaeda has established a safe haven near Pakistan's border with Afghanistan. For example, State's April 2007 *Country Reports on Terrorism* states that Pakistan remains a major source of Islamic extremism and a safe haven for some top terrorist leaders, including those of al Qaeda.

The NIE, *The Terrorist Threat to the U.S. Homeland*, also found that al Qaeda had effectively found replacements for many of its senior operational planners over the years. The NIE stated that, in the past 2 years, al Qaeda's central leadership regenerated the core operational capabilities needed to conduct attacks against the United States. It also found that al Qaeda's central leadership, based in the border area of Pakistan, is and will remain the most serious terrorist threat to the United States.

The 2008 DNI *Annual Threat Assessment* and other sources have concluded that the resurgence of al Qaeda terrorists on the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan now pose a preeminent threat to U.S. national security. The assessment also examines the impact of not meeting the national security goals. It states that al Qaeda is now using the Pakistani safe haven to put the last element necessary to launch another attack against America into place, including the identification, training, and positioning of Western operatives for an attack. It stated that al Qaeda is most likely using the FATA to plot terrorist attacks against political, economic, and infrastructure targets in America "designed to produce mass casualties, visually dramatic destruction, significant economic aftershocks, and/or fear among the population."

DNI's 2008 assessment found that al Qaeda and other Pakistan-based militants now also pose a threat to Pakistan. The assessment found an unparalleled increase in suicide attacks against Pakistan's military and civilians over the past year, with total casualties in 2007 exceeding all such attacks in the preceding 5 years. These attacks were ordered by Pakistan-based militants, many of whom are allied with al Qaeda. It found that the terrorist assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto could encourage terrorists to strike the Pakistani establishment anywhere in the

country. The assessment concluded that radical elements now have the potential to undermine Pakistan itself.

The United States Has Relied Primarily on the Pakistani Military to Accomplish Its Goals in Pakistan's FATA, with Little Focus on Economic Development and Improving Governance

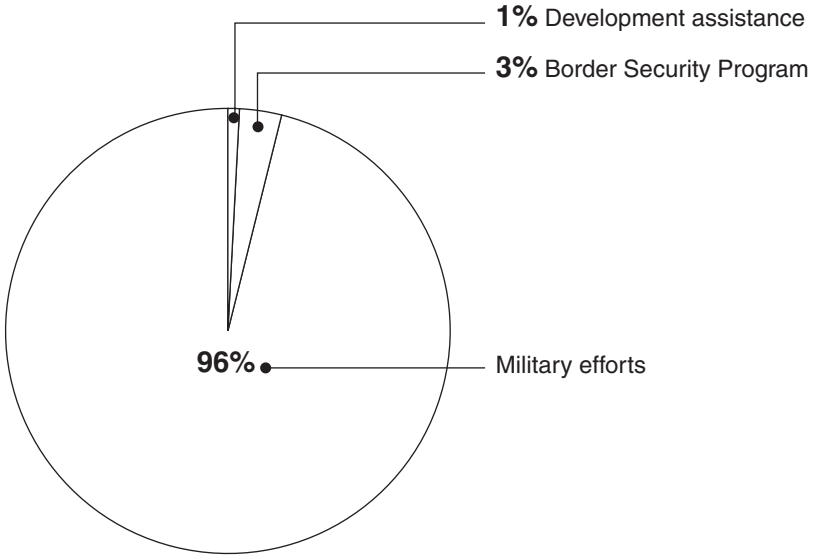
Since 2002, the United States has relied principally on the Pakistani military to address U.S. national security goals in the FATA. There have been limited efforts, however, to address other underlying causes of terrorism in the FATA, such as providing development assistance or addressing the FATA's political needs. For example, although the FATA has some of the worst development indicators in Pakistan and is ruled under colonial administrative and legal structures dating from 1901, the United States has devoted little funding to address these issues in the FATA.

From fiscal years 2002 to 2007, the United States has provided Pakistan with more than $10.5 billion in funds and assistance.[9] Approximately $5.8 billion of this amount has been directed at efforts to combat terrorism in Pakistan's FATA and the border region. As figure 2 shows, about 96 percent of this amount was used to reimburse the Pakistani government through CSF[10] for military operations in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, most significantly against terrorists in Pakistan's FATA and border region. We identified only two nonmilitary activities that occured in the FATA and border region: State's Border Security Program, which received about $187 million, and USAID development activities, which amounted to about $40 million.

[9]GAO arrived at this figure by analyzing Defense, State, and USAID documents. We identified major sources of U.S. funding to Pakistan, including $5.56 billion in CSF reimbursed through June 2007, $1.98 billion in development assistance (through December 2007), $1.6 billion in economic support fund cash transfers to support basic government operations, $1.22 billion for the purchase of military equipment, $9 million in international military training, and $202 million in border security assistance.

[10]CSF reimburses Pakistan for a variety of activities in support of the global war on terror, the majority of which consists of Army and Air Force operations against terrorists in Pakistan's FATA and the border region. However, some of the CSF also supports Pakistani Navy and Air Force activities outside of this area. Defense was unable to quantify what was reimbursed for activities outside the FATA and the border region at the time of our report, and therefore, we included all CSF funds in figure 2 as funds going toward the FATA and the border region.

Figure 2: Percentage of U.S. Funding Directed toward Military, Border Security, and Development Activities in Pakistan's FATA and Border Region from Fiscal Years 2002 to 2007



Source: GAO analysis of Defense, State, and USAID data.

According to a State Department report, Pakistan's military forces have had some tactical successes in the FATA. The Pakistani government stationed military and paramilitary forces along the border with Afghanistan, and security operations in the FATA disrupted terrorist activity by targeting and raiding al Qaeda and other militant safe havens.[11] According to State, Pakistan has helped kill or capture hundreds of suspected terrorists, including al Qaeda operatives and Taliban leaders. In addition, Pakistani military operations have resulted in the deaths of approximately 1,400 members of its security forces.

[11]Department of State report to Congress, pursuant to Section 2042 of the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commissions Act of 2007 (P.L. 110-53).

Key Government Stakeholders Recognize That a More Comprehensive Approach Is Needed

Defense, State, U.S. embassy, and Pakistani government officials recognize that relying primarily on the Pakistani military has not succeeded in neutralizing al Qaeda and preventing the establishment of a safe haven in the FATA. State's April 2007 *Country Reports on Terrorism* states that, despite having Pakistani troops in the FATA and sustaining hundreds of casualties, the government of Pakistan has been unable to exert control over the area. The report concluded that Pakistan has now recognized that military operations alone will not restore security and stability to the FATA. Similarly, U.S. embassy officials in Pakistan stated that Taliban and al Qaeda elements have created a safe haven in the FATA and have used it to plan and launch attacks on Afghan, Pakistani, U.S., and coalition forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The embassy further noted that al Qaeda and the Taliban continue to recruit, train, and operate in the FATA.

According to senior embassy officials, U.S. reliance on Pakistan's military stemmed from the lack of a comprehensive plan to guide embassy efforts and the sense that the Pakistani military was the most capable institution in Pakistan to quickly undertake operations against al Qaeda immediately after the attacks of 9/11. Senior embassy officials stated that this may have led to an "over-reliance" on the Pakistani military to achieve U.S. national security objectives in Pakistan.

No Comprehensive Plan for Guiding U.S. Efforts in the FATA Has Been Developed, as Called for by the Administration and Congress

Despite the recognition of U.S. government officials, including the U.S. President and Congress, that a comprehensive plan employing all elements of national power—diplomatic, military, intelligence, development assistance, economic, and law enforcement support—was needed to combat terrorism and close the terrorist safe haven in Pakistan's FATA region, a comprehensive plan to meet U.S. national security goals in the region was never developed. Recognizing in 2006 that military efforts alone would not succeed in the FATA, the embassy, with Defense, State, and USAID support, and in conjunction with the Pakistani government in power at that time, began an effort to focus more attention on the other key elements of national power, such as development and public diplomacy, to address U.S. national security goals in the FATA. However, this effort has not been formally approved by U.S. government stakeholders who would play a key role in the funding and implementation of such an effort, and support from the recently elected Pakistani government is uncertain.

Presidential Powers for Implementing National Security Strategies and Developing a Comprehensive Plan

The President of the United States has primary responsibility to ensure that his national security strategy is carried out effectively. The President has the authority to task executive branch departments to develop comprehensive plans that use all elements of U.S. power—diplomatic, military, intelligence, development assistance, economic, and law enforcement support—toward meeting U.S. national security goals. As a result, the President can task key national security agencies, such as Defense, State, USAID, the Departments of Homeland Security, Justice, the Treasury, and intelligence agencies, to develop a comprehensive, integrated strategy and to use their combined capabilities to combat terrorism, as called for in the national security strategies. The President can also use the NSC[12] and the NCTC[13] to assist in developing, coordinating, and monitoring these plans.

Despite Executive, Congressional, and Independent Calls for Comprehensive Plans to Combat Terrorism and Close Terrorist Safe Havens, Such Plans Were Never Developed

As table 1 shows, the need for the development of comprehensive plans employing all elements of national power—diplomatic, military, intelligence, development assistance, economic, and law enforcement support—to combat terrorism and close terrorist safe havens has been recognized by the President's national security strategies (2003), the independent 9/11 Commission (2004), and by Congress in repeated legislation (2004 and 2007). As it became clearer that al Qaeda had retreated from Afghanistan into Pakistan and was creating a safe haven in the FATA, Congress increased its demands on the U.S. administration to develop comprehensive plans to help Pakistan combat terrorism and close the FATA safe haven.

[12]The NSC is charged with more effectively coordinating the policies and functions of the departments and agencies related to national security. The NSC advises the President with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign, and military policies relating to national security to enable the departments and agencies to cooperate more effectively in matters involving national security.

[13]The NCTC is charged with conducting strategic operational planning for counterterrorism activities, integrating all instruments of national power—including diplomatic, military, intelligence, development assistance, economic, and law enforcement support—within and among agencies, with the ultimate goal of preventing future attacks against the United States and its interests worldwide. Both report directly to the President.

Table 1: Key Recommendations by Executive, Independent, and Congressional Sources to Combat Terrorism and Close Terrorist Safe Havens

Key document	Source	Recommendation
National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, 2003	President Bush and the NSC	• Called for comprehensive plans employing all elements of national power—diplomatic, military, intelligence, development assistance, economic, and law enforcement support—to combat terrorism • Gave State lead to develop coordinated plans; all appropriate departments were to develop supporting strategies • Directed Defense, State, and intelligence agencies to annually assess and develop plans to close safe havens
9/11 Commission Report, 2004	9/11 Commission, an independent, bipartisan study group mandated by Congress in 2002	• Stated that long-term success demands coordinated, comprehensive, multidepartment efforts employing all elements of national power • Recommended that a single entity be responsible for comprehensive, multidepartment planning for U.S. efforts to combat terrorism • Recommended U.S. (1) make a long-term, comprehensive commitment to assist Pakistan to combat terrorism and (2) develop a strategy to close safe havens
Intelligence Reform Act, 2004	Congress	• Authorized creation of the NCTC to develop comprehensive, multidepartment plans to combat terrorism employing all elements of national power • Stipulated that such plans should include (1) the mission, (2) objectives, (3) tasks to be performed, (4) interagency coordination, and (5) roles and responsibilities. It also tasked the NCTC with monitoring each agency involved • Required a report within 180 days of passage of the act on the administration's strategies for (1) closing terrorist safe havens and (2) assisting Pakistan to combat terrorism
9/11 Commission Act, 2007	Congress	• Required the President to submit a report by November 2007 on the strategy, employing all elements of national power, to combat terrorism in the FATA

Source: GAO analysis of key documents.

Despite recommendations by the President's own national security strategy, by the independent 9/11 Commission, as well as legislative mandates from Congress, a comprehensive plan to destroy the terrorist threat or close the safe haven in the FATA was never developed. Even after the creation of the NCTC, an organization specifically intended to develop, implement, and monitor multidepartment plans to combat terrorism, the embassy has yet to receive any such plan to combat terrorism in Pakistan's FATA. In addition, the administration did not report to Congress on its plans for assisting Pakistan in (1) combating terrorism and (2) closing terrorist safe havens, as required by both the 2004 and 2007 legislation.

As a result, the embassy has lacked a Washington-approved, comprehensive plan that combines the capabilities of Defense, State, USAID, intelligence agencies, and other U.S. departments to combat terrorism in the FATA. According to senior embassy officials in Islamabad,

the embassy had not received a comprehensive plan from the CIA, Defense, State, the NCTC, the NSC, the White House, or any other executive department. Further, these officials stated that they had not received any strategic guidance on designing, implementing, funding, and monitoring a comprehensive effort that would use all elements of national power to combat terrorism in Pakistan. According to senior embassy officials, given the strategic threat to America, the United States should have a comprehensive strategy to defeat terrorists that uses all elements of national power.

Defense, State, the DNI, USAID, and the government of Pakistan recognize that a comprehensive approach is needed to meet U.S. national security goals in Pakistan. For example, in its 2007 *Country Reports on Terrorism*, State indicated that Pakistan recognized that military operations alone would not restore stability to the FATA; instead, a comprehensive strategy was needed that also included economic, social development, political, and administrative efforts to enhance security in the region. The U.S. Embassy in Pakistan also concluded that, while force is a necessary component of an overall strategy to combat terrorism in the FATA, it is not sufficient as the sole component. Similarly, the DNI stated that Pakistan now recognizes it must take a more comprehensive approach to defeating terrorism and that an intensified and sustained effort that combines administrative, economic, educational, legal, and social reforms to defeat the terrorist threat is required.[14]

We have previously reported on the need for plans to combat terrorism to include elements that would enhance interagency cooperation and improve effectiveness. Specifically, in large-scale interagency efforts where collaboration is essential, we have found that agencies should (1) define and articulate a common outcome; (2) establish mutually reinforcing or joint strategies; (3) identify and address funding needs by leveraging resources; (4) agree on roles and responsibilities; (5) establish compatible policies, procedures, and other means to operate across agency boundaries; (6) develop mechanisms to monitor, evaluate, and report on results; (7) reinforce agency accountability for collaborative efforts through agency plans and reports; and (8) reinforce individual

[14]Annual Threat Assessment of the Director of National Intelligence for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Feb. 5, 2008.

accountability for collaborative efforts through performance management systems.[15]

Pakistan and the U.S. Embassy are Encouraging More Focus on Other Key Elements of National Power to Achieve U.S. Goals in the FATA

In March 2006, the President of Pakistan requested that President Bush support Pakistan's effort to support a more comprehensive approach to combating terrorism in the FATA. As a result, the U.S. Embassy in Pakistan began coordinating efforts by Defense, State, and USAID to develop department-specific efforts to support Pakistan's Sustainable Development Plan for the FATA. Pakistan's Sustainable Development Plan is a 9 year, $2 billion effort to provide economic development, extend the influence of the Pakistani government, and establish security in the FATA. To assist this effort, Defense undertook a counterinsurgency assessment in the FATA and began developing its Security Development Plan. At the same time, USAID provided technical assistance to the Pakistani government to help formalize its Sustainable Development Plan, as well as to plan USAID-development activities in the FATA.

This approach, if approved by the administration and key U.S. government agency stakeholders, would constitute the U.S. government's first attempt to focus more attention on other key elements of national power to address U.S. counterterrorism goals in the FATA. These elements include development assistance and public diplomacy, as well as counterinsurgency training, which have not been part of the previous military approach. This new approach also calls for greater levels of direct U.S. planning, implementation, coordination, and oversight. However, this new approach does not yet constitute a comprehensive plan, and all of the agencies' individual efforts have not been fully approved in Washington. Furthermore, funding shortfalls exist, and support by the recently elected government of Pakistan is uncertain.

If fully approved, the United States would provide an estimated $956 million between fiscal years 2008 through 2011 for development, security, capacity building, and infrastructure in support of the Pakistani government. This approach represents the first effort by the U.S. embassy to directly plan, implement, coordinate, and monitor a multidepartment effort to combat terrorism in the FATA. According to officials with the U.S. embassy, the Pakistani government, and international donors, this

[15]See GAO-07-697, GAO-06-15, and GAO-03-519T.

comprehensive approach is critical to addressing the terrorist threat in the FATA and represents a significant departure from the past.

As of September 2007, the embassy planned to spend $187.6 million on this initial effort using fiscal year 2007 funds. The funding has been directed to four areas:

- **Development:** The $99 million development effort would be led by USAID and would include capacity building for the FATA institutions needed to plan, manage, and monitor development projects; efforts to build community and government relations; funding for health and education services; and efforts to increase employment and economic growth.[16]

- **Security:** The $54.1 million Defense and State security effort would include training for military and paramilitary units in the FATA—including the Frontier Corps, special operations forces, and air crews—and for providing night vision goggles, radios, and other equipment.

- **Infrastructure:** The $32.5 million the U.S. embassy has designated for infrastructure improvements related to both its security and development efforts would be used for road construction, the Frontier Corps training center, and border surveillance outposts.

- **Public diplomacy:** $2 million in funding was allotted for public diplomacy programs.

According to the embassy, the success of this new effort in the FATA will depend on close coordination among an array of institutions within the U.S. and Pakistani governments. The new effort also will involve partner agencies and allies, including the United Kingdom, Japan, and Europe; the Asian Development Bank; nongovernmental organizations; and the Pakistani private sector, civil society, and the tribes of the FATA.

We plan to monitor the status and progress of the U.S. government in developing this effort and provide an assessment in a subsequent report covering security, political, and development activities undertaken by the United States to meet U.S. national security goals in the FATA.

[16]In commenting on this report, USAID stated they received $88 million for these efforts in the Fiscal Year 2007 Supplemental Appropriation.

Conclusion

Combating terrorism is the United States' top national security priority at home and abroad. Since 9/11, U.S. national security strategies have consistently called for using all elements of national power to combat terrorism, including diplomatic, military, intelligence, development assistance, economic, and law enforcement support. Because the use of the various elements of national power falls under the authority of numerous U.S. government agencies, the development of a comprehensive plan is needed to ensure that the full capacity of the U.S. government is focused on meeting U.S. national security goals.

We believe that such a plan would help to ensure coordination, integration, and implementation of U.S. efforts to close the terrorist safe haven in the FATA. A comprehensive plan to combat terrorism in the FATA that establishes goals, objectives, priorities, outcomes, and milestones, including specific performance measures, would allow an assessment of progress and help ensure accountability of U.S. efforts. As such, we believe that the administration should develop a comprehensive plan using the full capabilities provided by Defense, State, USAID, and other U.S. agencies and stakeholders to further assist Pakistan in combating terrorism.

Recommendations for Executive Action

We recommend that the National Security Advisor and the Director of the NCTC, in consultation with the Secretaries of Defense and State, and the Administrator of USAID, the intelligence community, and other executive departments as deemed appropriate, implement the congressional mandate to develop a comprehensive plan using all elements of national power to combat the terrorist threat and close their safe haven in Pakistan's FATA region.

The comprehensive plan should also include key components called for in the Intelligence Reform Act, the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007, and components that we have previously reported as being needed to improve the effectiveness of plans involving multidepartmental efforts to combat terrorism.[17] The plan should (1) place someone directly in charge of this multidepartment effort to improve accountability; (2) articulate a clear strategy to implement the national security goal to destroy terrorists and close the safe haven in the FATA; (3) clarify roles and responsibilities of each department for implementing

[17] GAO-07-697, GAO-06-15, and GAO-03-519T.

the goal; (4) provide guidance on setting funding priorities and providing resources to meet these national security goals; and (5) require a monitoring system and provide periodic reports to Congress on the progress and impediments to meeting national security goals in Pakistan.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

State, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), Defense, and USAID provided written comments on a draft of this report, which are reproduced in appendixes I, II, III, and IV.

State and ODNI did not comment on our recommendation, while Defense and USAID concurred with our recommendation. In general, they all commented on their individual planning efforts and interagency meetings to coordinate these efforts that began in 2006. This, however, was not the focus of our review; our report assessed whether a comprehensive plan had been developed that incorporated all elements of national power. We plan to conduct a detailed assessment of the individual agency efforts from 2002 to the present as part of our broader engagement efforts and look forward to working closely with ODNI, Defense, State, USAID, and other agencies in assessing their plans and efforts to meet national security goals in Pakistan.

State's comments assert that embassy and U.S. government efforts to date have resulted in a comprehensive strategy. We disagree and note in our report that, while the initiatives begun by Defense, State, and USAID are being coordinated by the embassy, they have not been fully approved or integrated into a formal, comprehensive plan. While we acknowledge that this effort is a step in the right direction toward implementing the 2003 national security strategy, the recommendations by the 9/11 Commission, and Congress, it is unclear whether the new approach will include all of the key elements of national power, such as intelligence, economic, and law enforcement support.

ODNI's comments stated that they agreed with our finding that the United States had not met its national security goals in Pakistan's FATA and that countering the growth of terrorist safe havens requires all elements of national power. They disagreed, however, that the United States lacks plans to combat terrorism in the area. Our report does not state that the U.S. lacks individual plans; rather, we found that there was no comprehensive plan that integrated the combined capabilities of Defense, State, USAID, the intelligence community, and others to meet U.S. national security goals in Pakistan.

We also received technical comments from Defense and USAID, which we have incorporated throughout the report where appropriate.

As agreed with your offices, unless you publicly announce the contents of this report earlier, we plan no further distribution until 30 days from the report date. At that time, we will send copies of this report to interested congressional committees, to the National Security Advisor of the NSC, the Director of the NCTC, the Secretaries of State and Defense, and the Administrator of USAID. We will also make copies of this report available to others upon request. We will also make copies available at no charge on the GAO Web site at http://www.gao.gov.

If you or your staffs have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-7331 or johnsoncm@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made major contributions to this report are listed in appendix V.

Charles Michael Johnson Jr.
Director, International Affairs and Trade

Congressional Requesters

The Honorable Howard Berman
Chairman
The Honorable Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Affairs
House of Representatives

The Honorable Gary Ackerman
Chairman
The Honorable Mike Pence
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on the Middle East
and South Asia
Committee on Foreign Affairs
House of Representatives

The Honorable John F. Tierney
Chairman
The Honorable Christopher Shays
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
House of Representatives

The Honorable Tom Harkin
The Honorable Robert Menendez
United States Senate

Appendix I: Comments from the Department of State

United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

APR 07 2008

Ms. Jacquelyn Williams-Bridgers
Managing Director
International Affairs and Trade
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001

Dear Ms. Williams-Bridgers:

We appreciate the opportunity to review your draft report, "COMBATING TERRORISM: U.S. Lacks Comprehensive Plan to Destroy Terrorist Threat and Close Safe Haven in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas," GAO Job Code 320573.

The enclosed Department of State comments are provided for incorporation with this letter as an appendix to the final report.

If you have any questions concerning this response, please contact Tom West, Desk Officer, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, at (202) 647-6710.

Sincerely,

Bradford R. Higgins

cc: GAO – Charles Michael Johnson
SCA – Richard Boucher
State/OIG – Mark Duda

Department of State Comments on GAO Draft Report

Combating Terrorism: U.S. Lacks Comprehensive Plan to Destroy Terrorist Threat and Close Safe Haven in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas
(GAO-08-622; GAO Code 320573)

The Department of State appreciates the opportunity to review the Government Accountability Office (GAO) draft report titled: *Combating Terrorism: U.S. Lacks Comprehensive Plan to Destroy Terrorist Threat and Close Safe Haven in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas.*

The study does not acknowledge that the United States had an overall plan for Pakistan, put together in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. That initial plan called for working closely with and supporting the Pakistani military to confront the extremists militarily and working to deny them their safe havens along the Pakistan-Afghan border. To a large extent, the plan worked. From 2001-2006, we – or the Pakistanis – arrested or killed hundreds of al-Qaeda and Taliban extremists, shattered terrorist networks, disrupted their training camps and short-circuited terrorist operations. U.S.-Pakistani cooperation made it more difficult for terrorists to operate in Pakistan. By the end of 2006, 120,000 Pakistani troops were involved in on-going operations against violent extremists along the Pakistan-Afghan border. The GAO draft report acknowledges this but fails to attribute it to a deliberate planning effort.

The immediate post-9/11 plan was, however, largely military and was therefore limited in its effect. Additionally, the plan was undercut by events following the 2006 North Waziristan agreement between the militants and the Government of Pakistan (also unaddressed in the report), during which time terrorists were able to rebuild and regroup.

We and the Pakistanis recognized that a new plan was needed to address the broader conditions that support terrorism; specifically, the abysmal social conditions in the Tribal Areas and the absence of central authority there. A series of interagency meetings in summer of 2006 (Deputies Committees meetings on July 16 and August 22, specifically) laid further groundwork for what became our current FATA strategy and our support for the Pakistani Sustainable Development Plan for the Tribal Areas. This strategy brought

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together security assistance for the local Frontier Corps, economic and development assistance for the Tribal Region, private sector development programs, and our proposal for Reconstruction Opportunity Zones for job creation in border areas of both Pakistan and Afghanistan. Taken together with complementary military and intelligence participation, this became our comprehensive, integrated strategy and has been implemented since that time.

The GAO draft does acknowledge the difficult conditions in Pakistan, the vast un-policed territories, the abysmal social conditions in the tribal belt and our need to rely completely upon a Pakistani military under-equipped and under-trained to conduct counter-insurgency operations. It also acknowledges the decades when the Tribal Areas were used as a jihadist training area and jumping off point for the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan. But the Report fails to acknowledge the continuing efforts that have gone into devising, funding and implementing a broad-based plan to address these conditions.

Appendix II: Comments from the Department of Defense

ASIAN & PACIFIC
SECURITY AFFAIRS

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

2700 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-2700

APR 07 2008

Mr. Charles Johnson Jr.
Director, International Counterterrorism Issues,
International Affairs and Trade
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548

Mr. Johnson:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the GAO Draft Report, GAO-08-622, "COMBATING TERRORISM: U.S. Lacks Comprehensive Plan to Destroy Terrorist Threat and Close Safe Haven in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas," dated March 28, 2008 (GAO Code 320573).

We have enclosed comments addressing the report and its recommendations.

My point of contact is Mr. Eric Lebson, 703-697-3754, or e-mail: eric.lebson@osd.mil.

Sincerely,

James J. Shinn

GAO DRAFT REPORT DATED MARCH 28, 2008
GAO-08-622 (GAO CODE 320573)

"COMBATING TERRORISM: U.S. LACKS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TO DESTROY TERRORIST THREAT AND CLOSE SAFE HAVEN IN PAKISTAN'S FEDERALLY ADMINISTERED TRIBAL AREAS"

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS
TO THE GAO RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION: The GAO recommends that the National Security Advisor and the Director of the National Counterterrorism Center, in consultation with the Secretaries of Defense and State, and the Administrator of United States Agency for International Development, the intelligence community, and other executive departments as deemed appropriate, implement the congressional mandate to develop a comprehensive plan using all elements of national power, to combat the terrorist threat and close their safe haven in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas region. The comprehensive plan should also include key components called for in the Intelligence Reform Act and by GAO to improve the effectiveness of plans involving multi-departmental effort to combat terrorism. (p. 25/GAO Draft Report)

DOD RESPONSE: Concur. DoD supports the development of a comprehensive plan to close safe havens in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas. In November 2007 and February 2008, DoD provided to the State Department inputs for a comprehensive strategy. DoD has participated in a wide variety of inter-agency meetings that have addressed the on-going development of this strategy. This includes Deputies Committee meetings on 14 and 20 March 2008 and long-standing weekly informal South/Central Asia inter-agency meetings hosted by the Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia. DoD is continuing to play an active role in the inter-agency effort to develop and coordinate a comprehensive plan to close terrorist safe havens in Pakistan.

NOTE: DoD has forwarded technical comments (context, inaccuracies and additional background) about the report directly to GAO and recommended their consideration for the final version of the report.

Attachment
Page 1 of 1

Appendix III: Comments from the U.S. Agency for International Development

APR 9 2008

Mr. Charles Michael Johnson, Jr.
Director
International Affairs and Trade
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Johnson:

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) appreciates the opportunity to review and respond to your draft audit report entitled "COMBATTING TERRORISM: U.S. Lacks Comprehensive Plan to Destroy Terrorist Threat and Close Safe Haven in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas," GAO-08-622.

In general, we concur with your overall recommendation that the U.S. Government (USG) needs a comprehensive plan for work in the FATA. However, work in the FATA should be guided by the Government of Pakistan's own FATA Sustainable Development Plan, which was developed in consultation with the USG and was completed in 2006. The USAID plan for programs in the FATA was presented to the USG's interagency in December 2006. Prior to the formal presentation, this plan was vetted thoroughly with, and approved by, the country team in Islamabad, and also in the interagency in Washington.

Additionally, please note that:

- USAID is an instrument of "soft power" as opposed to the "hard power" programs with the Pakistani military described extensively in the draft report. Our programs focus on addressing the underlying causes of insurgencies and the development issues which allow for terrorist safe havens. Successful strategies in settings such as the FATA depend on mutually reinforcing hard and soft approaches conducted in tandem.
- The embassy's engagement on strategic development in FATA began in summer 2006 and included reopening a USAID office in Peshawar, launching a

U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20523
www.usaid.gov

development strategy in tandem with the GOP and organizing a FATA donor's discussion at the fall 2006 World Bank/IMF meetings in Singapore.

- USAID initially started with small scale programs in education, health and microfinance as pilots which then determined the strategy for our larger programs currently being implemented.

In conclusion, we feel that the GAO should recognize the Government of Pakistan, USAID and the wider country team for advancing strategic thinking on the FATA development program.

Thanks very much for the opportunity to comment on this report and for the courtesies extended by your staff in the conduct of this review.

Sincerely,

Lisa Chiles
Deputy Assistant Administrator
Bureau for Asia

Appendix IV: Comments from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE
WASHINGTON, DC 20511

April 8, 2008

Ms. Janet St. Laurent
Managing Director, Defense Capabilities
and Management
United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Ms. St. Laurent:

(U) The Office of the Director of National Intelligence and the National Counterterrorism Center appreciate the opportunity to review the GAO report number 08-622 *Combating Terrorism: U.S. Lacks Comprehensive Plan to Destroy Terrorist Threat and Close Safe Haven in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas.* Although we agree that the United States has not yet met its national security goals in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), we disagree that the United States lacks plans to combat terrorism in the area.

(U) Effectively countering the growth of extremism and the emergence of terrorist safehavens requires all elements of national power, to include diplomatic, military, development assistance, financial, law enforcement, and intelligence. The National Security Council, the Department of State, and the Department of Defense, have, therefore, been actively involved in the United States Government efforts to deny our terrorist enemies safehavens such as the FATA. The Office of the Director of National Intelligence, the National Counterterrorism Center, and the Intelligence Community have also been actively involved in such efforts.

(U) The National Counterterrorism Center, for example, produced the landmark National Implementation Plan for the War on Terror, which was signed by the President in June 2006, and was the first-ever United States Government-wide strategic plan for countering terrorism. This war plan does not stand alone. Rather, it complements two types of planning efforts that have long existed and continue to exist: (1) high-level national strategies directed by the President and the National Security and Homeland Security Councils, and (2) very granular and tactical department and agency-specific implementation plans.

(U) The National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) has also been expanding its ongoing efforts to coordinate near-term department and agency activities at the strategic operational level in certain key regions of the world. NCTC combines regional and functional priorities to ensure its strategic operational planning initiatives, which by definition are interagency in nature, properly balance high-level and mission centric perspectives, and are comprehensive in drawing on all instruments of national power. NCTC has participated in a recently-completed interagency initiative to determine counterterrorism priorities, which, along with other efforts, provide a regional perspective to functional efforts and plans, such as the National Implementation Plan.

(U) I thank you again for the opportunity to review this report and look forward to working with your office in the future.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Turner

Kathleen Turner
Director of Legislative Affairs

Appendix V: GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact:

Charles Michael Johnson Jr., Director, International Affairs and Trade, (202) 512-7331 or johnsoncm@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the individual named above, Hynek Kalkus, Assistant Director; Edward J. George; Claude Adrien; David Hancock; Lynn Cothern; Karen Deans; Mark Dowling; and Jena Sinkfield made key contributions to this report.

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