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Shuster Delivers First Hand Report of Security Situation in Afghanistan

Completes Week-Long Congressional Delegation Trip to AFPAK Theater

Washington, D.C. – **Congressman Bill Shuster** has just wrapped-up a week long trip to the Middle East as part of a Congressional Delegation to get a first hand assessment of the security situation in Afghanistan its impact on regional allies.

For more information on the rest of the congressman's trip and to schedule an interview with Congressman Shuster next week, please contact Jeff Urbanchuk at jg.urbanchuk@mail.house.gov or 202-225-2431.

What follows is Shuster's first-hand report of what he saw in Afghanistan:

“Contrary to reports in the national media, progress is being made in Afghanistan. This improvement is noticeable since my last trip to the region and I believe it is the direct result of President Bush's commitment of additional resources beginning in 2008 and more recently, General McChrystal's well thought out counterinsurgency strategy and President Obama's willingness to surge combat troop levels in Afghanistan.

We did not just add over 30,000 troops to the effort in the surge. We also tripled the civilian security force which is critical to achieving stability. The Department of State, USDA, DHS and the FBI have all increased their presence and now have well over 1000 civilian employees in the field helping in stabilization efforts.

Our coalition partners are exceeding recruitment goals for the Afghan Army and Police. The Afghan economy grew a rate of over 20 percent in 2009. I could see and feel the improvements driving through the streets of Kabul. Improvements in infrastructure, roads, sanitation, schools and hospitals are transforming the city. I saw traffic jams and what seemed like thousands of Afghans in the streets doing everyday business at a rate not seen on my previous tours of the city.

These improvements demonstrate that the strategy put in place by General McChrystal and continued by General Petraeus of protecting citizens and aggressively killing or capturing Taliban insurgents is having a positive impact on the security situation in Afghanistan.

That being said, significant challenges still remain. Because our troops and the Afghan Army and Police have been aggressively attacking the enemy, we have seen increase in casualties which is unfortunate but predictable. The government of President Karzai is still very fragile. He needs to stamp out corruption or he will lose faith with the Afghan people. I can see that he is fighting, but and it is a struggle he must win.

Finally, sanctuaries for the Taliban and al Qaeda in Pakistan remain a significant challenge to the security situation in Afghanistan and the larger region. The devastating flooding that continues to affect large portions of Pakistan has been a set back for the Pakistanis to clamp down on the insurgents.”

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