

EXCHANGE OF LETTERS BETWEEN
CONGRESSMAN WOLF AND THE
ADMINISTRATION REGARDING
THE AFGHANISTAN/PAKISTAN
STUDY GROUP (APSG)

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 20, 2012

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, news reports from Afghanistan continue to show that U.S. policy is not working. For fiscal year 2012, the House provided the secretary of defense \$1 million to establish the Afghanistan/Pakistan Study Group (APSG). Modeled after the successful Iraq Study Group (ISG), the APSG would be a bipartisan panel bringing together the best and brightest minds to provide solutions on how to assure a successful outcome in this troubled region. I have written President Obama and Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta over a dozen times asking that the APSG be established, so the American people will know that every effort is being made to address a faltering U.S. policy at a critical juncture. I submit for the RECORD the first part of a series of letters from August 4, 2010 through September 15, 2011 on this important topic. How can President Obama and Secretary Panetta, who served on the ISG, continue to claim that putting “fresh eyes” on U.S. strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan is a bad idea? Additional correspondence with the administration between October 3, 2011 and December 13, 2012 will follow tomorrow.

Hon. BARACK H. OBAMA,
The President, The White House, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: On September 14, 2001, following the catastrophic and deliberate terrorist attack on our country, I voted to go to war in Afghanistan. I stand by that decision and have the utmost confidence in General Petraeus's proven leadership. I also remain unequivocally committed to the success of our mission there and to the more than 100,000 American troops sacrificing toward that end. In fact, it is this commitment which has led me to write to you. While I have been a consistent supporter of the war effort in both Afghanistan and Iraq, I believe that with this support comes a responsibility. This was true during a Republican administration in the midst of the wars, and it remains true today.

In 2005, I returned from my third trip to Iraq where I saw firsthand the deteriorating security situation. I was deeply concerned that Congress was failing to exercise the necessary oversight of the war effort. Against this backdrop I authored the legislation that created the Iraq Study Group (ISG). The ISG was a 10-member bipartisan group of well-respected, nationally known figures who were brought together with the help of four reputable organizations—the U.S. Institute for Peace, the Center for the Study of the Presidency, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and the Baker Institute for Public Policy at Rice University—and charged with undertaking a comprehensive review of U.S. efforts there. This panel was intended to serve as “fresh eyes on the target”—the target being success in Iraq.

While reticent at first to their credit President Bush, State Secretary Rice and Defense Secretary Rumsfeld came to support the ISG, ably led by bipartisan co-chairs, former Secretary of State James Baker and former Congressman Lee Hamilton. Two members of your national security team, Secretary of

Defense Robert Gates and CIA Director Leon Panetta, saw the merit of the ISG and, in fact, served on the panel. Vice President Biden, too, then serving in the Senate, was supportive and saw it as a means to unite the Congress at a critical time. A number of the ISG's recommendations and ideas were adopted. Retired General Jack Keane, senior military adviser to the ISG, was a lead proponent of “the surge,” and the ISG referenced the possibility on page 73. Aside from the specific policy recommendations of the panel, the ISG helped force a moment of truth in our national conversation about the war effort.

I believe our nation is again facing such a moment in the Afghanistan war effort, and that a similar model is needed. In recent days I have spoken with a number of knowledgeable individuals including former senior diplomats, public policy experts and retired and active military. Many believe our Afghanistan policy is adrift, and all agreed that there is an urgent need for what I call an Afghanistan-Pakistan Study Group (APSG). We must examine our efforts in the region holistically, given Pakistan's strategic significance to our efforts in Afghanistan and the Taliban's presence in that country as well, especially in the border areas.

This likely will not come as a surprise to you as commander in chief. You are well acquainted with the sobering statistics of the past several weeks—notably that July surpassed June as the deadliest month for U.S. troops. There is a palpable shift in the nation's mood and in the halls of Congress. A July 2010 CBS news poll found that 62 percent of Americans say the war is going badly in Afghanistan, up from 49 percent in May. Further, last week, 102 Democrats voted against the war spending bill, which is 70 more than last year, and they were joined by 12 Members of my own party. Senator Lindsay Graham, speaking last Sunday on CNN's “State of the Union,” candidly expressed concern about an “unholy alliance” emerging of anti-war Democrats and Republicans.

I have heard it said that Vietnam was not lost in Saigon; rather, it was lost in Washington. While the Vietnam and Afghanistan parallels are imperfect at best, the shadow of history looms large. Eroding political will has consequences—and in the case of Afghanistan, the stakes could not be higher. A year ago, speaking before the Veterans of Foreign War National Convention, you rightly said, “Those who attacked America on 9/11 are plotting to do so again. If left unchecked, the Taliban insurgency will mean an even larger safe haven from which al Qaeda would plot to kill more Americans. So this is not only a war worth fighting . . . this is fundamental to the defense of our people.” Indeed it is fundamental. We must soberly consider the implications of failure in Afghanistan. Those that we know for certain are chilling—namely an emboldened al-Qaeda, a reconstituted Taliban with an open staging ground for future worldwide attacks, and a destabilized, nuclear-armed Pakistan.

Given these realities and wavering public and political support, I urge you to act immediately, through executive order, to convene an Afghanistan-Pakistan Study Group modeled after the Iraq Study Group. The participation of nationally known and respected individual's is of paramount importance. Among the names that surfaced in my discussions with others, all of whom more than meet the criteria described above, are ISG co-chairs Baker and Hamilton; former Senators Chuck Robb, Bob Kerrey and Sam Nunn; former Congressman Duncan Hunter, former U.S. ambassador Ryan Crocker; former Secretary Of Defense James Schlesinger, and General Keane. These harms are simply suggestions among a cadre of capable

men and women, as evidenced by the makeup of the ISG, who would be more than up to the task.

I firmly believe that an Afghanistan-Pakistan Study Group could reinvigorate national confidence in how America can be successful and move toward a shared mission in Afghanistan. This is a crucial task. On the Sunday morning news shows this past weekend, it was unsettling to hear conflicting statements from within the leadership of the administration that revealed a lack of clarity about the end game in Afghanistan. How much more so is this true for the rest of the country? An APSG is necessary for precisely that reason. We are nine years into our nation's longest running war and the American people and their elected representatives do not have a clear sense of what we are aiming to achieve, why it is necessary and how far we are from attaining that goal. Further, an APSG could strengthen many of our NATO allies in Afghanistan who are also facing dwindling public support, as evidenced by the recent Dutch troop withdrawal, and would give them a tangible vision to which to commit.

Just as was true at the time of the Iraq Study Group, I believe that Americans of all political viewpoints, liberals and conservatives alike, and varied opinions on the war will embrace this “fresh eyes” approach. Like the previous administration's support of the Iraq Study Group, which involved taking the group's members to Iraq and providing high-level access to policy and decision makers, I urge you to embrace an Afghanistan-Pakistan Study Group. It is always in our national interest to openly assess the challenges before us and to chart a clear course to success.

As you know, the full Congress comes back in session in mid-September—days after Americans around the country will once again pause and remember that horrific morning nine years ago when passenger airlines became weapons, when the skyline of one of America's greatest cities was forever changed, when a symbol of America's military might was left with a gaping hole. The experts with whom I have spoken in recent days believe that time is of the essence. In moving forward with a study panel, and waiting for Congress to reconvene is too long to wait. As such, I am hopeful you will use an executive order and the power of the bully pulpit to convene this group in short order, and explain to the American people why it is both necessary and timely. Should you choose not to take this path, respectfully, I intend to offer an amendment by whatever vehicle necessary to mandate the group's creation at the earliest possible opportunity.

The ISG's report opened with a letter from the co-chairs that read, “There is no magic formula to solve the problems of Iraq. However, there are actions that can be taken to improve the situation and protect American interests.” The same can be said of Afghanistan.

I understand that you are a great admirer of Abraham Lincoln. He, too, governed during a time of war, albeit a war that pitted brother against brother, and father against son. In the midst of that epic struggle, he relied on a cabinet with strong, often times opposing viewpoints. Historians assert this served to develop his thinking on complex matters. Similarly, while total agreement may not emerge from a study group for Afghanistan and Pakistan, I believe that vigorous, thoughtful and principled debate and discussion among some of our nation's greatest minds on these matters will only serve the national interest. The biblical admonition that iron sharpens iron rings true.

Best wishes.
Sincerely,

FRANK R. WOLF,
Member of Congress.

P.S. We as a nation must be successful in Afghanistan. We owe this to our men and women in the military serving in harm's way and to the American people.

Hon. LEON PANETTA,
Secretary of Defense, The Pentagon, Washington, DC.

DEAR SECRETARY PANETTA: I write today concerning the U.S. mission in Afghanistan and Pakistan. My amendment, which gives the secretary of Defense the authority to establish an Afghanistan/Pakistan (Af/Pak) Study Group, was included in the House-passed FY 2012 Defense Appropriations bill. I pressed for the amendment because I believe fresh eyes are needed now to examine the situation on the ground and the overall U.S. mission.

I envision the Af/Pak Study Group being modeled after the Iraq Study Group (ISG). Both you and your predecessor Bob Gates served on the ISG and know better than most the benefits it provided after three years of fighting in Iraq. Now that the U.S. is in its 10th year in Afghanistan, I believe a similar effort is necessary.

Before he was appointed as ambassador to Afghanistan, Ryan Crocker supported creating an Af/Pak Study Group, along with Ambassador Ronald Neumann and Jim Dobbins from the RAND Corporation. American men and women are fighting and dying in Afghanistan. If we are asking them to put their lives on the line daily, I believe we have an obligation to provide an independent evaluation of the U.S. mission. We owe our military forces nothing less.

I do not have the answers. But as you know, there is a movement building in Congress in favor of pulling troops out of Afghanistan. An amendment offered by Rep. Jim McGovern earlier this year to the National Defense Authorization Act to accelerate U.S. departure from Afghanistan was narrowly defeated 204-215. If six members had changed their vote, the amendment would have passed. I have talked to several members who voted against the McGovern amendment who are seriously concerned about the war in Afghanistan and could change their vote if the situation on the ground does not improve rapidly.

I also believe it is critical that Afghanistan be examined in tandem with the facts on the ground in Pakistan. It is clear that in order to be successful in Afghanistan, we must have a clear understanding of how Pakistan is influencing U.S. operations. Just look at the recent news from the region. Hamid Karzai's half-brother was murdered and his funeral bombed. Karai advisor Jan Mohammed Kahn was murdered, and militants attacked and laid siege to the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul. The enclosed article printed recently in the Washington Post states, "... optimism and energy vanished long ago, gradually replaced by cynicism and fear. The trappings of democracy remained in place ... but the politics of ethnic dog fights, tribal feuds and personal patronage continued to prevail."

The men and women serving in Afghanistan deserve to have fresh eyes look at this region as soon as possible. With House passage of the Af/Pak amendment, I ask that you use your authority as secretary and move quickly to create this study group. I have discussed my amendment with John Hamre at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and he has offered to coordinate the group with professionals with a wide range of expertise.

I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this important initiative

and look forward to working with you to ensure we are successful in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Best wishes.
Sincerely,

FRANK R. WOLF,
Member of Congress.

Hon. LEON PANETTA,
*Secretary of Defense,
The Pentagon, Washington, DC.*

DEAR SECRETARY PANETTA: I want to follow up on my previous letter regarding Afghanistan policy and bring to your attention a book I am reading, *The Wars in Afghanistan*, discussed in the enclosed Washington Post book review. Its author, Ambassador Peter Tomsen, is a veteran of the Foreign Service and has an impressive background in the South Asia region. If you have not read his book, I highly recommend it to you. The Post review concludes: "This long overdue work ... is the most authoritative account yet of Afghanistan's wars over the last 30 years and should be essential reading for those wishing to forge a way forward without repeating the mistakes of the past."

After three years of the Iraq war, the formation of the Iraq Study Group garnered the support of Secretary Rumsfeld, Secretary Rice, and Joint Chiefs General Pace. Our military men and women have been putting their lives on the line in Afghanistan every day for 10 years, seven years longer than when the decision was made to create the ISG to provide the independent assessment needed for U.S. policy in Iraq. I believe we owe it to our brave soldiers to focus now with fresh eyes on the target in Afghanistan.

I have spoken with Ambassador Tomsen about a framework for moving forward in Afghanistan, and he would be happy to meet with you and your team to discuss his breadth of experience there. I urge you to take him up on his offer.

Best wishes.
Sincerely,

FRANK R. WOLF,
Member of Congress.

Hon. LEON PANETTA,
*Secretary of Defense,
The Pentagon, Washington, DC.*

DEAR SECRETARY PANETTA: I want to draw your attention to the enclosed letter I received from retired Marine Corps General Charles Krulak regarding an Afghanistan/Pakistan (Af/Pak) Study Group.

General Krulak makes an important point that we cannot be successful in Afghanistan if we do not address the ongoing tensions and frequent hostilities between Pakistan and India. I again ask you to take the language in the FY 2012 Defense Appropriations bill and use your authority to create the Af/Pak Study Group. Every day we delay is another missed opportunity to successfully address U.S. policy in South Asia.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to meeting with you in the near future to discuss this important issue.

Best wishes.
Sincerely,

FRANK R. WOLF,
Member of Congress.

Hon. LEON PANETTA,
Secretary of Defense, The Pentagon, Washington, DC.

DEAR SECRETARY LEON PANETTA: I know you care deeply about the men and women in uniform fighting in Afghanistan. That's why I am disappointed that no one from your staff has contacted former Ambassador Peter Tomsen, an expert on Afghanistan, to meet with him, as I requested in my letter to you of August 1 (enclosed).

Ambassador Tomsen's new book, *The Wars of Afghanistan*, is receiving positive reviews,

including the enclosed review in the recent edition of *Foreign Affairs*. The review praises the book as providing an in depth description of the social structure of Afghanistan and the mistakes repeated by numerous foreign countries that have tried to help establish military and political cohesion in the country. The review states, "Whether one agrees with Tomsen, however, there is no denying that his descriptions of Afghanistan's society and politics are a valuable foundation for any discussion of how the country should be governed . . . Given Tomsen's track record, Americans should give a respectful hearing to his call for a thorough policy reformulation—something beyond tweaks to troop numbers and counterinsurgency tactics."

I believe this book should be required reading for you and your team at the Pentagon. Ambassador Tomsen is ready and willing to lend his expertise to this important effort and I again ask that you or your staff meet with him.

Leon, I renew my call that you use your discretion as secretary and create the Af/Pak Study Group. We owe it to the men and women serving and the families and spouses at home to ensure we have the correct strategy. After 10 years of fighting, it is time to have a fresh set of eyes examine U.S. strategy. Far from a sign of weakness, creating an independent Af/Pak study group would show the Nation that we are doing everything possible to achieve our goals in this region.

I would welcome the chance to speak with you on this matter.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

FRANK R. WOLF,
Member of Congress.

Hon. LEON PANETTA,
Secretary of Defense, U.S. Department of Defense, The Pentagon, Washington, DC.

DEAR SECRETARY PANETTA: It was good to be with you at the Pentagon on Sunday to honor the lives lost there 10 years ago in the 9/11 attacks. I want to congratulate you on a moving ceremony that showed reverence to the Pentagon employees and the passengers of American Flight 77 that perished on that awful morning. I appreciated your comments and those of Admiral Mullen. Several of my constituents died at the Pentagon and the first U.S. service member killed in Afghanistan was my constituent. I thank you and all those who have served in public office and in uniform in the 10 years we have waged war against global terrorism.

As I waited for the program to begin on Sunday, I saw you and former Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and was struck by a vivid memory from 2005 of the events surrounding the Iraq war. We were three years into the war, the security situation in Iraq was deteriorating, and our soldiers were dying every day. As a member of Congress who voted to send our troops to fight, I believed I had the added responsibility to make sure the administration was receiving the best advice possible on our Iraq strategy.

So I proposed creating the Iraq Study Group (ISG) made up of experts outside government to bring what I called "fresh eyes" on the target. Secretary Rumsfeld, General Pace, Secretary Rice, and NSC Chairman Hadley all came to see the value in the ISO. By your participation, I think it is fair to say you also saw its benefit, and I greatly appreciated your outstanding service on the bipartisan panel. You and the other Democratic members who gave your time during a Republican administration exemplified the true meaning of service to your country.

We are now into the 10th year of fighting in Afghanistan and the challenges we face there continue. In 2001, I was the first member of Congress, along with Rep. Joe Pitts, to

visit Afghanistan after the U.S. invasion, against the wishes of the Defense Department. We saw firsthand the devastation that the Taliban had visited on Kabul as well as the remnants of the U.S. Embassy that was abandoned in 1979. I have also traveled to Pakistan and seen the difficulties that country faces combating the Afghan Taliban and other terror groups. Despite the current conditions, all my experience in this region tells me that success is possible if we formulate the right strategy to deal with both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

As with the ISG, I believe fresh eyes are needed now to examine U.S. policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The security situation continues to erode as evidenced by coordinated insurgent attacks on heavily fortified U.S. and NATO compounds just this week. The Taliban still finds safe haven in the tribal wilderness of Pakistan and the ISI actively funds terrorist groups.

Given these and other concerns on the ground in Afghanistan, I continue to be puzzled why you, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Secretary Clinton are not supporting the Af/Pak Study Group idea in the same manner that Secretary Rumsfeld and other Bush administration officials supported the ISG. Having the experience of serving on the ISG and now serving as Secretary of Defense with a Democratic president (who I acknowledge inherited the war in Afghanistan), you are in a unique position to make this group a reality. The authorization and funding for the Af/Pak Study Group in the House-passed Defense Appropriations bill gives you the authority to create this group today.

I have to tell you that I continue to be disappointed that your staff has yet to contact former Ambassador Peter Tomsen to discuss his book, *The Wars of Afghanistan*. His book provides insightful information on the tribal structure of both Afghanistan and Pakistan and the political allegiances that underlie all actions in the region. I believe his knowledge and experience in this region would be invaluable in formatting future policy in South Asia. I respectfully ask again: please take advantage of his work and meet with him as soon as possible.

Leon, I don't have the answers on Afghanistan. Perhaps current U.S. strategy is the best way forward. But we owe it to the men and women in uniform who have served and continue to serve there—some paying the ultimate sacrifice—to know definitively. I continue to believe that fresh eyes from outside government focused on assessing the situation is the prudent action to take. I ask that you take the advice of those who support an Af/Pak Study Group, including Jim Dobbins, General Charles Krulak, Ryan Crocker, who I spoke with prior to his appointment as ambassador to Afghanistan, and other prominent Americans with experience in this region.

I believe it would be a sign of strength to appoint a study group and let the American people know that the administration is willing to examine all possible policies to achieve a successful outcome in this troubled region.

Best wishes,
Sincerely,

FRANK R. WOLF,
Member of Congress.

LAMONT MEAUX—HARD CORE
TEXAN

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 20, 2012

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, service to God and country are the most honorable accomplishments and contributions that a person can make in life. Those who choose the path are the few, the bold, the brave, and the courageous. Today I am proud to honor decorated soldier, successful business owner, and devoted family man Lamont Meaux for his work on behalf of his country and his community.

Lamont Edward Meaux has known the cost of service to one's country since the day he was born. On September 2, 1945, his father Clifton Meaux, who was serving his country in the United States Navy at the end of the Second World War, received a telegraph with 6 simple words that would change his life forever: "Son born, Mom and baby ok." This sense of purpose and sacrifice would go on to define Lamont's life.

As a young child, Lamont's family moved from Beaumont, TX, to the Winnie-Stowell area of South East Texas. Farming is the main economic activity in the area, and Lamont would learn at an early age that he possessed quite the green thumb. Before the age of 10, he was growing and selling tomatoes for 17 cents a pound. He is still happy to share his secrets with anyone who will listen. Lamont would also spend time working in the abundant oil fields across Southeast Texas before graduating from East Chambers High School in Winnie, Texas.

His success growing tomatoes made Lamont a natural fit for Texas A&M University. He was a member of the Corps of Cadets Company C-2, whose motto "Our family is our strength" is very appropriate. As a proud Aggie, Lamont would drive his "Old Blue" car to as many football games as possible, both home and away. He would earn his BS in Industrial Distribution in 1968 and a week later married JoRella White.

Upon graduation, the United States was entrenched in the Vietnam War. Knowing that he would be called to duty, Lamont did all he could to protect his family while he was gone. He worked for a few months at an engineering firm in Dallas and even sold his Texas A&M Senior Boots. Senior Boots are the most prized possession of any Aggie. In May of 1968, as a member of the United States Army, he left for Fort Benning in Georgia for Officer's Infantry School. The next year he took off to Panama to train at the Jungle Operations Training Center to prepare him for conditions unlike anything he could see in Southeast Texas. His grandsons love to hear how he was taught worms and bugs and jungle survival.

Lamont was then ready for deployment as 1st Lieutenant of the United States Army's 199th Light Infantry Brigade. While he was being transported to his assignment in Vietnam, Lamont was asked if he knew the average life span of an Infantry Lieutenant in "The Country." He was shocked to hear "27 seconds" but continued on, determined to serve his country to the best of his ability. Lt. Meaux fought in the hot steamy jungles of Vietnam

against America's enemy. He doesn't talk much about what he saw. He does remind those at home that a lot of good men served with him. Some returned. Some returned with wounds of war. Some did not return. According to a man who served under him, Lamont "was a good soldier's officer who cared and felt for his men, but still served his country as an officer and a gentleman." He was known as a leader who would do anything to protect his men.

When Lt. Meaux returned to America he, like most Vietnam veterans, was treated badly by Americans who did not serve America. In February of 1970, Lamont would be discharged from the United States Army with numerous honors. He was awarded a National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Bronze Star Medal, Second Oak Leaf Cluster, and two Over Seas Bars. When asked why he did not put in for the Purple Heart, Lamont responded that there were others he sent out in the jungle that came back with more serious injuries. One souvenir he was proud to bring home was a telegram with the same 6 words that his father brought back: "Son born, Mom and baby ok." They would have 3 sons before the marriage ended in 1994. Those sons were Edward, Terrell, and David. Lamont would remain a member of the Army Reserves through 1974.

The heroic service Lamont made during his time in the Vietnam War lined him up for a promotion to Captain, but his heart belonged to his family back in Southeast Texas. He returned home and took up what was natural to him—farming. For the next 25 years, he would farm rice, wheat, soy beans, and milo, at one time up to 3,000 acres. Mr. Speaker, I probably represent more rice farmers than any other member in Texas. Let me tell you, rice farming is hard intense working of the land.

Lamont Meaux's ingenuity was not confined to the battlefield or the farm. In 1976, Lamont saw the need for some corrugated metal drainage pipes on the farm. Thinking big, he ordered a train load, used what he needed and sold the rest to the other farmers in the area. This is the beginning of Seabreeze Culvert, Inc. Lamont would eventually start designing his own drainage control structures, turning Seabreeze from a simple agricultural dealer to a respected creative solution provider for industrial, environmental, commercial, and municipal areas. He would go on to create Seebreeze Chemical, Inc., to provide cheaper products for the local farmers as well as raising chickens as Seabreeze Farm.

Lamont is a vital part of the community as well. He is a member of the Winnie Chamber of Commerce, Society of Professional Engineers, Texas Farm Bureau, and Corps of Cadets Association at Texas A&M. Meaux is Master Chairman for the Beaumont A&M Club, board member of the East Chambers Agricultural Historical Society, and committee member of the Regional Advisory Council of the General Land Office. Lamont is a past member of the American Rice Growers Association, American Soybean Association, and American Rice Growers Exchange.

A lifelong interest in politics paid off for Lamont in a much unexpected way. In 1997, Hazel, a staffer working on Kay Bailey Hutchison's U.S. Senate campaign, heard about a former Aggie much like herself that was very politically minded. They met at a Beaumont A&M Club meeting in 1997 and hit