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## **Shuster Gets On-the-Ground Assessment of Progress in Afghanistan**

### ***Marks 3<sup>rd</sup> Trip to Afghanistan to Meet with Troops***

Washington, D.C. – During the first week of August, **Congressman Bill Shuster** visited Afghanistan as part of a Congressional Delegation with senior members of the House Armed Services Committee to review the security situation in the country and get a first hand assessment of President Obama’s new strategy and operations against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.

“As we increase the number of American troops serving in Afghanistan, it is critical that members of Congress get a first-hand assessment of how our commanders are planning strategy and how the Afghan government intends to improve security,” Shuster said. “Briefings in Washington are no substitute for seeing the situation with my own eyes and offering support and thanks to our troops in the field.”

The timing of Shuster’s trip comes at a critically important point with national elections in Afghanistan scheduled for August 20<sup>th</sup>. The last election held in Afghanistan was October of 2004 in which President Hamid Karzai was elected to serve a five-year term in office. Additionally, the new U.S. Commander in Afghanistan, General Stanley McChrystal is in the process of conducting a 60-day review to include a thorough assessment of the war effort.

“We face a critical point in Afghanistan and I believe General McChrystal has developed a strategy that will defeat the counter insurgency that we and the Afghan people face,” Shuster said from Afghanistan. “It will require more manpower and funding from the U.S. and our coalition partners. More importantly it will demand more of the Afghan people. It will be tough and it will take more time. Our troops are ready willing and able to succeed but they cannot do it without the support and will of the American people.”

During his visit to Afghanistan, Shuster met with the five major figures that are in charge of shaping a modern Afghanistan. Shuster met with **President Hamid Karzai**; Afghanistan’s Interior Minister **Mohammad Hanif Atmar**; the Minister of Defense **Abdul Rahim Wardak**; U.S. Ambassador **Karl Eikenberry**; and U.S. Commander **General Stanley McChrystal**. Congressman Shuster also met with our soldiers serving in Afghanistan throughout his trip.

“This fight is not just about Afghanistan denying AQ and Taliban operational space it also is about make certain that the Islamic extremists don’t destabilize Pakistan and get their hands on their nuclear weapons,” Shuster said.

“Our troops are doing their absolute best to take the fight to the Taliban, and we need to make sure they have the training, equipment and support necessary to complete their mission,” Shuster said. “But the fighting is one part of a larger mission in Afghanistan. The United States and our allies must continue to fund and support efforts that will create lasting security in Afghanistan and eliminate safe havens for terrorists.”

The United States currently has over 50,000 troops in Afghanistan and President Obama has promised to increase that number by 10,000 by 2012. In addition, the Administration is also considering doubling the size of the Afghan military and police force by 2011.

**\*\*Photos of Congressman Shuster’s trip to Afghanistan will be made available after the Department of Defense releases them to the Congressman Shuster’s office\*\***

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