

June 24, 2010

WASHINGTON, DC—U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio (OR-04) today in a speech on the House floor, urged President Obama to reconsider his policy in Afghanistan in light of the replacement of General McChrystal.

A copy of DeFazio's comments on the House floor today are below, as well as the video:

"The President has been given a unique opportunity today with the firing of General McChrystal who was the principle author and advocate of the surge strategy in Afghanistan.

His theory was that it would be a clear, hold and transfer to the Afghan police who don't exist, to the security forces who are in disarray and to the government which doesn't exist in any meaningful way outside of the Capitol. There is unbelievable corruption rife throughout the Karzi government, the police, and security forces.

Even before General McChrystal was fired, he admitted this mission was going to take much longer and be much harder and than he originally thought. This means President Obama's dictate of starting a withdrawal next summer is not realistic.

So we have a choice. We can either get into a very long-term engagement at a cost of \$30 billion a year and tremendous sacrifice by our troops on a strategy that has not worked. Or, we can re-think that strategy, perhaps along the lines of what Vice President Biden has proposed. I agree with Vice President Biden who sees this as mostly an inter- and intra- tribal fight with

some radical Taliban elements, some radical Pakistan Taliban elements and a few al Qaeda.

The U.S. can take care of any terrorist forces coming in from outside with a smaller troop presence and should let the Afghans work out their tribal and intra-tribal conflicts that they've been carrying on over for 600 years. We can help them adopt policies to meaningfully rebuild their country.

I know the President has said no change in policy, but I think he should step-back, consult again with his advisers, look at the results of the war so far. He should listen to those critical comments in the article by Pentagon officials suggesting this is going to take years and years, may require a second surge, and requiring additional troops in Afghanistan.

Is this starting to sound like Viet Nam to anyone? We prop up a government that has no relationship to the rest of the country, with wide-spread corruption, and that government falls and another comes in. The Afghan situation echos that failure.

So, in the strongest terms possible, I urge the President, now that General McChrystal is gone, to reconsider our policy in Afghanistan and move toward a much less expensive, much less troop intensive strategy that would bring about a much better result in Afghanistan."

