

Member of Parliament Seminar

November 2011



David Dreier, Chairman • David Price, Ranking Democratic Member

Focusing on Defense Oversight in the Afghan Legislature

From October 31 to November 4, 2011, the House Democracy Partnership (HDP) organized a weeklong seminar for 10 Members of Parliament from Afghanistan, all of whom hold positions on defense oversight committees. This program, which focused on strengthening legislative oversight of the military, was organized in cooperation with the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies (NESA Center) of the National Defense University.

The Members of Parliament met with several of their counterparts in the U.S. House of Representatives, including the Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Democracy Partnership, the Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, and a number of Members who serve on Appropriations subcommittees tied to national security spending. The seminar illustrated how the U.S. Congress conducts civilian oversight of the vast American military complex and how those lessons may be tailored to Afghanistan.

The program began with an overview of the U.S. committee structure by CRS. In addition to meeting with Members of the House of Representatives, the Afghan delegation met with senior staff from both the House and Senate Armed Services Committees and attended a House Committee on Foreign Affairs hearing on U.S. policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan. Following the hearing, the delegates had an opportunity to meet with the Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, Representative Steve Chabot, and the three female MPs in the delegation met with representatives from the U.S. Congressional Afghan Women's Task Force.

In addition to Members and staff from the legislative branch, the Afghan delegation also met with scholars from the National Defense University, senior Pentagon officials, and senior officials at the State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development to discuss bilateral issues.

This was the third defense oversight seminar that HDP and the NESA Center have organized for Afghan MPs, following programs in 2007 and 2008. HDP and the NESA Center organized similar defense oversight seminars for Pakistani MPs in 2009 and 2010. HDP and the Asia Pacific Center for Strategic Studies organized a defense oversight seminar for MPs from Mongolia and Indonesia in 2008.