



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0606

January 25, 2006

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Madam Secretary:

I have recently been made aware of a disturbing military operation taking place in Pakistan's Balochistan province over the past month.

As I understand it, beginning on December 18th, Pakistan's security forces mounted an all-out assault in the Kohlu and Dera Bugti districts of Balochistan. The soldiers have used helicopter gun-ships, fighter aircraft and other types of sophisticated weaponry in their attacks. Unfortunately, we have credible reports of increasing civilian casualties.

The independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, following an investigative mission to the area, "*expressed serious alarm over the rapidly deteriorating situation in and around Dera Bugti and reiterated its demand that all armed conflict cease immediately and a process of negotiation begin.*" According to the Commission, the area has been effectively sealed off and most of the inhabitants have left. In addition, the mission itself came under attack when trying to cross into the conflict area.

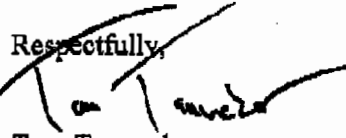
The citizens of the area in question have long opposed the central government's treatment of its people and resources. The province provides the majority of the country's gas resources, yet it receives only 12.4% of the profits. The literacy rate is an appalling 25% for men and 5% for women. The evidence suggests that as the central government in Islamabad lines its pockets with Balochistan's wealth, its innocent citizens suffer at the hands of merciless soldiers.

Madam Secretary, I am aware that there is an armed resistance in Balochistan and do not condone in any way, shape or form acts of violence committed by such groups. However, the Pakistani government's policy of resorting to force to crush its citizens' demands for their equal rights has not worked in the past and is not likely to work now. A dialogue is needed between the Baloch people and the central government in order for their grievances to be resolved once and for all. Without such an effort, there will not be an end to the bloodshed.

I do not deny the fact that the Government of Pakistan has been a steadfast ally of the United States in the War on Terror. However, its continued operations in Balochistan divert important military resources that could be used to hunt Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups.

It is my understanding that President Bush will be traveling to Pakistan and India in March of this year. Please urge him to raise this issue with President Musharraf so this dispute may come to a conclusion and further losses of life may be prevented.

Respectfully,



Tom Tancredo
Member of Congress