

RELEASE IN PART
B5

From: Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>
Sent: Thursday, September 24, 2009 12:27 PM
To: H
Subject: Fw: Senate -- next week

Also printing for u

From: Verma, Richard R
To: Abedin, Huma
Sent: Thu Sep 24 12:06:41 2009
Subject: FW: Senate -- next week

Maybe she could skim this in some of her "free time" tonight or tomorrow....

From: Verma, Richard R
Sent: Thursday, September 24, 2009 12:01 PM
To: Steinberg, James B; Lew, Jacob J; Mills, Cheryl D; Sullivan, Jacob J; Chollet, Derek H; Abedin, Huma
Cc: Campbell, Piper; Crocker, Bathsheba N; Polt, Michael C; Turk, David M
Subject: Senate -- next week

Will likely take up Defense Appropriations. Reid's staff are expecting at least one day (if not more) of debate on Afghanistan. There will likely be a McCain/Graham/Lieberman Resolution backing McCrystal. There will also be at least one Democratic alternative supporting the President's reevaluation of the strategy and expressing support for the troops. There could also be a Feingold Resolution calling for a timeline for getting the troops out of Afghanistan. We will work with Reid staff in offering inputs to the Democratic alternative resolution.

Amidst all this, there is a pending request for General Jones to provide a Senate all members briefing on what is happening with the President's reevaluation of the Af/Pak strategy, when certain decisions will be made, what is included in the scope of the re-review, and why the current strategy has not been given a chance to play out. The Senate would like Secretary Gates to appear with Jones as well. DoD is still evaluating that request. To be clear, General Jones has also not yet accepted the invitation, so the situation is still rather fluid. We should expect the House to ask for a similar brief next week, once they learn of the Senate request. Meanwhile, today we are sending to the Hill the benchmarks required in the supplemental spending bill. Of course, these may need to be recalibrated following the current Af/Pak review.

We have been talking [redacted] about doing more regular inter-agency briefings of the House and Senate on AF/Pak. [redacted]

[redacted] We would welcome such an announcement, as anything we can do to inform members about the process underway right now would be helpful. We are losing ground. There is a lack of understanding regarding the review taking place, its scope and when decisions will be made. The General Jones briefing, if it occurs, should help in that regard. But we need to be doing more. We also need to identify how and when we deploy the Secretary, and whether she should consider joining a Jones/Gates briefing next week. I know she will be out of town.

B5

Also, there is an October 7th date looming, where HFAC has requested Ambassador Holbrooke, and SFRC has requested Secretary Clinton -- both to testify on Af/Pak. We have tried to put off committing to either request thus far, but we will have to make final decisions, probably early next week.

Welcome thoughts on all this, but the main point of this email was to flag the Senate debate next week, the Jones briefing, and the need to assess how and when to have Secretary Clinton and Ambassador Holbrooke engage the Hill in the coming days and weeks.

Thx.