



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on May 6, 2011

How Not to End U.S. Aid to Pakistan

Poe's legislation, the Pakistan Foreign Aid Accountability Act ([H.R. 1699](#)), would prohibit all U.S. assistance to Pakistan unless the Secretary of State certifies to Congress that either Pakistan's government had no information regarding bin Laden's whereabouts since Sept. 11, 2001, or Pakistan's government communicated such information as it had to the U.S. government "in an expedited manner."

"Pakistan has a lot of explaining to do," [Poe said](#) in introducing his bill. "It seems unimaginable that Osama bin Laden was living 1,000 yards away from a military base in a million dollar mansion built especially for him and no one in the Pakistani government knew about it. I don't buy it."



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In fact, bin Laden was not living in "a million dollar mansion" but in [a moldy, un-air-conditioned house](#). Still, it does strain credulity to believe that the Pakistani government, or at least some part of it, was entirely unaware of bin Laden's presence. Yet this is precisely the kind of "cooperation" all that U.S. aid to Pakistan over the last decade has bought our government.

Poe is right to be suspicious of sending any more money to Islamabad. Others in Congress agree. Three of them — Reps. Vern Buchanan (R-Fla.), John Culberson (R-Texas), and Allen West (R-Fla.) — are cosponsoring Poe's bill. House Armed Services Committee Vice Chairman Mac Thornberry (R-Texas) "agreed that Washington should review and strengthen the stipulations it places on aid to Pakistan," [according to *The Hill*](#). Likewise, Rep. Brad Sherman (D-Calif.) told C-SPAN that any aid to Pakistan "has got to be carefully given, only to the right forces, only for the right reasons and only in return for expected results." And Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.) [said in a statement](#), "Until Congress and the American public are assured that the Pakistani government is not shielding terrorists, financial aid to Pakistan should be suspended."

Of course, foreign aid is a government program; and like all other government programs, when it fails to achieve its stated objectives, there are those who demand not the program's abolition but its expansion. Such is the case with aid to Pakistan. "President Obama requested nearly \$3 billion in aid to Pakistan in his 2012 budget proposal," writes *The Hill*, and administration "officials have stressed the need to continue working with Pakistan." CIA Director Leon Panetta told NBC News that "we have to go forward with the Pakistanis," and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stumped for continued aid to Pakistan in March when the Pakistani government was holding American defense contractor [Raymond Davis](#) for his killing of two Pakistanis. (Davis was later released.)

The fact that Clinton is fully on board with ongoing U.S. aid to Pakistan proves just how pointless Poe's bill is. The Secretary of State, after all, is the one who must certify that Pakistan has been cooperating



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with the United States *vis-à-vis* bin Laden, and it is not hard to imagine Clinton's offering up specious "certification" to Congress while withholding specific details on the grounds that releasing them would be injurious to national security.

The White House isn't the only cheerleader for continuing to funnel Americans' money to Pakistan. House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) [said](#) Thursday, "I support continued engagement with Pakistan, and frankly, I believe our aid should continue to Pakistan.... Taking on al-Qaeda and radical extremism is absolutely vital to the interests of both of our countries. So it's not a time to back away from Pakistan: It's time for more engagement with them, not less."

Foreign aid, despite the bipartisan consensus in favor of it, is patently unconstitutional and frequently counterproductive. As Rep. Ron Paul (R-Texas) [put it](#) on Wednesday, "Foreign aid to Pakistan, though bin Laden was safely protected for 10 years in Pakistan, should make us question the wisdom of robbing American citizens to support any government around the world with foreign aid." Indeed, rather than trying to make sure that foreign aid goes only to the "right" people and gets the "right" results, as others in Congress suggested, following Paul's advice to end all foreign aid would not only save American taxpayers billions of dollars each year but would also keep the United States out of many foreign conflicts, saving Americans further billions — and lives.

Poe is correct to desire an end to aid to Pakistan, especially given the fruitlessness of such aid. As one who has sworn to uphold the Constitution, however, he should amend his legislation to ban this aid unconditionally.

Photo: Rep. Ted Poe

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