



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on July 17, 2012

Sen. Paul Proposes Bill to Cut Aid to Pakistan

Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.) is aiming for a  [July 20 vote](#) on the Senate floor that would cut off all U.S. foreign aid to Pakistan until the Pakistani government releases Dr. Shakil Afridi, who has been imprisoned for helping the CIA track down and kill Osama bin Laden. According to Paul, he has enough support in the Senate for such a measure to pass.

Dr. Afridi has been sentenced to 33 years in prison for his assistance to the CIA. *Roll Call* [reports](#),

Afridi has been convicted of treason for his alleged role helping the U.S. government stage a fake vaccination campaign that allowed for the collection of DNA from the people inside bin Laden's compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan.

Dr. Afridi's brother Jamil — who reports that Shakil has suffered torture while in custody prior to his sentence — has appealed to the U.S. embassy to fight on his brother's behalf.

Senator Paul had attempted unsuccessfully to add an amendment to the recently passed farm bill that would have halted aid to Pakistan; however, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid performed a procedural move called "filling the tree" — which means taking up all the amendment space — thus preventing Paul's amendment from even being considered.

At the time, Paul declared, "This amendment is of the utmost urgency — would only require 15 minutes of the Senate's time." But Reid retorted, "There has to be a time and place for everything, and hopefully we can have a full debate on Pakistan in the near future."

For Paul, that time is now.

Congress had been considering a proposal to strip \$33 million in aid from Pakistan to protest its treatment of Dr. Afridi, but Paul contends that that amount is not enough to pressure the Pakistani government. Paul's bill would cut off aid to Pakistan for the remainder of this year as well as next year. As [observed](#) by the *Wall Street Journal*, "Congress appropriated \$2 billion for the current fiscal year, but much of it remains unspent. For next year, Congress is considering proposals of around \$1 billion in aid."

The Kentucky senator commented that his legislation should come as no surprise to his colleagues: "Most people up here know I am not a big fan of foreign aid and I am willing to pull the trigger on this."

Paul's measure follows a long standoff between the United States and the Pakistani government. Fox News explains:

The State Department recently announced it had struck a deal with Pakistan to reopen long-shuttered supply lines into Afghanistan — the thaw came after Secretary of State Hillary Clinton publicly apologized for a NATO strike last fall that killed 24 Pakistani soldiers.

Following the agreement, top Capitol Hill lawmakers signaled they would free up \$1.1 billion in U.S. aid to Pakistan that had been held up for six months over the standoff.

Senator Paul's bill would not stop that \$1.1 billion from being transferred, but would impact future



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funding.

Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Carl Levin (D-Mich.) and Senator Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) agree that despite the imprisonment of Dr. Afridi, the \$1.1 billion should be released.

"They [Pakistanis] don't deserve it [to have funding cut]. What they've done is presumably earned it by the amount of money they've laid out in terms of their anti-terrorist activity and protecting our lines," Levin told a group of reporters earlier this week.

"If you cut the money off, what leverage do you have? There may come a day when we do that, but not yet," Graham contended.

As well, the Pentagon has asserted that it is necessary to reimburse the Pakistani government for the money it spent on its counterterrorism efforts.

Rand Paul is aiming for a Senate vote on July 20 in order to provide Pakistan some time to make a decision after the scheduled appeal for Dr. Afridi on July 19. Paul spokeswoman Moira Bagley indicates that the vote this Friday is "tentative ... pending results of Dr. Afridi's appeal."

While congressional leaders stand opposed to Paul's bill, reports indicate he does have enough signatures for a cloture petition to force a vote. Paul intends to use a favorite procedural maneuver of Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.), which requires the signatures of 17 senators in order to force a vote on a motion to invoke cloture. In a letter to Reid, Paul stated,

I have worked consistently to bring awareness to Dr. Afridi's plight, and I have offered legislation to deny any current or future foreign assistance to the Pakistani government until they reverse course and free Dr. Afridi.

In pursuing a resolution to this situation, I have gained the necessary number of signatures on a cloture petition to force a vote on my legislation on the Senate floor. If Dr. Afridi is not released upon appeal, I will seek such a floor vote at the earliest opportunity.

This legislation would deny Pakistan tens of billions of dollars in foreign assistance into the future if Dr. Afridi is not freed — extending through the duration of his 33-year prison sentence, if necessary.

Paul has been working on behalf of Dr. Afridi for the last few weeks. He has been in contact with the Pakistani ambassador to the United States, Sherry Rehman, and has also been working with the State Department's top representative to the country. Paul declared,

Dr. Afridi's small but important contribution to the successful killing of the world's most infamous terrorist has been greeted with condemnation by Pakistani tribunals. His home was seized, his family was forcibly relocated and he has likely been subjected to the harshest of interrogation tactics during his detention.

Besides his father Dr. Ron Paul, the Kentucky senator has another ally in the House in Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R-Calif.), who has rallied for Dr. Afridi's cause for several weeks. Rohrabacher recently voiced concern to Fox News that lawmakers were losing interest in Dr. Afridi's cause: "It doesn't appear that other people are taking this case seriously. If we let that person [Afridi] just hang on a limb and forget him, now that he's put himself in danger for us — well shame on us."

The State Department contends that it is still working on Afridi's behalf, urging Pakistan to consider his appeal in an "expeditious" and "transparent" manner.



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Photo of Sen. Rand Paul: AP Images



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