



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on August 7, 2012

Rand Paul to Block Appointment of Ambassador to Pakistan

[According to reports out of Washington](#), Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.) will attempt to stall the confirmation of President Obama's nominee to fill the post of U.S. ambassador to Pakistan. Reportedly, Paul will stall the process until Pakistan releases a Pakistani doctor who played a vital role in the manhunt that led to the death of Osama bin Laden.



This is not Senator Paul's first foray into the fight for the doctor's freedom. In a conference call with reporters last month, Paul reiterated to reporters his call to withhold aid to Pakistan pending that country's release of Dr. Shakil Afridi, who is being held in a Pakistani prison on a 33-year sentence. Afridi ran a vaccination program in that city that was allegedly just a front for a CIA operation to obtain a DNA sample that would verify bin Laden's presence in the city. A senior CIA official [told the New York Times](#) that the effort ultimately was unsuccessful.

[According to news sources](#) inside Pakistan, Afridi's appellate hearing has been scheduled for August 30, and local officials fear for his safety based on reports of serious threats from militant inmates in the same facility.

Also in July, [Senator Paul sent a letter](#) to President Obama urging a delay in the release of American monetary support to Islamabad, and the denial of all aid until Dr. Afridi is released. He also has introduced legislation, S.B. 3269, calling for the same action.

"Democrats and Republicans always say that the key to Afghanistan is securing cooperation with Pakistan," Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry (D-Mass.) told *The Hill* in a statement when asked about Senator Paul's plans to delay the confirmation hearings. "That's reason enough to have a top notch diplomat in place in Islamabad. This is a complicated relationship that demands constant attention."

Senator Paul continues to be a thorn in the side of the federal government's efforts to send over \$1 billion in aid to our "ally in the War on Terror." [As The New American reported](#) recently:

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-



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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 funding. That isn't to say that Washington and Islamabad don't still have some problems to work out.

Last month, [Ambassador Cameron Munter left his post](#) after less than two years and the constant tension between the two nations is believed to be the reason for his departure. Although Munter's temporary replacement, Richard Hoagland, is a career diplomat who recently served as ambassador to Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, the Obama administration wants their new man approved quickly.

"President Obama nominated Richard Olson to serve as ambassador to Pakistan because he has a unique combination of experience, skill, and wisdom to successfully represent our nation in Islamabad. Both President Obama and Secretary Clinton remain strong supporters of his nomination," a State Department official [told The Hill](#).

"While we are disappointed that Ambassador Olson was not confirmed on Thursday, we are working closely with the Senate to ensure a swift and smooth confirmation process and hope Ambassador Olson will assume this critical post soon."

John Kerry worries about the potential harm to Pakistan should they go very long without a stable American diplomatic presence:

We've been working day and night with Pakistan to build a stable economy and strengthen our engagement with its people and after such a tumultuous year this is exactly the wrong time to leave such an important post vacant. I can't think of a good reason for doing so. We recognized the importance of this position and expedited it out of committee and I urge the Senate to move this nomination through as quickly as possible when we return from the recess.

On Thursday of last week, the Senate unanimously approved the nomination of James Cunningham, President Obama's choice for ambassador to Afghanistan, as well as those of nine other nominees.

In his speech in defense of Dr. Afridi, Senator Paul said:

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.



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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.

Paul has allies in his battle to pressure the Obama administration to come to the aid of Dr. Afridi before coming to the aid of the government holding him prisoner. Representative Dana Rohrabacher (R-Calif.) has described Dr. Afridi's imprisonment as "decisive proof Pakistan sees itself as being at war with us." In the Senate, those lawmakers concerned about the injustice voted unanimously to reduce the annual Pakistani aid package by \$33 million, \$1 million for every year of his sentence. Of course, that's a mere thimble-full of money taken out of the ocean of American foreign aid — \$800 million — set to flood Pakistan in 2013.

The Obama State Department has stated that it disapproves of Pakistan's treatment of Dr. Afridi:

"We've been absolutely clear, publicly and privately, that we think it's wrong he's locked up, we think it's wrong that he's being prosecuted," U.S. State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said in a statement released in May. She added, "And that in fact the role that he (Dr Afridi) played did a service not only for the world and the United States but obviously for the security of Pakistan. This was one of the biggest killers out there."

The Hill quotes Nuland as saying, "We continue to see no basis for Dr. Afridi to be held. We have regularly taken up this matter with Pakistan. I would expect we will continue to."

Although the Senate is on its summer holiday, they did not enter a formal recess, permitting them to hold pro-forma sessions whenever necessary. If President Obama does with Olson's nomination as he has done for others in the past, he might attempt to secure the confirmation of the would-be ambassador during the legislative break.

Photo of Rep. Rand Paul (R-Ky.): AP Images



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