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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Committees:

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Chairman, Subcommittee on
Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats
Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific

SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY
(VICE CHAIRMAN)

Subcommittee on Space
Subcommittee on Environment

June 26, 2013

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

I was shocked to see the front page *Washington Post* article of June 19 showing foreign contract laborers tearing apart million dollar U.S. military vehicles for scrap. The story claimed our military had already “destroyed more than 170 million pounds worth of vehicles and other military equipment as it rushes” out of Afghanistan. Heavily armored MRAPs are being demolished and the remnants sold by the pound for pennies in Pakistan. A Defense Logistics Agency employee is quoted as calling it “gold dust.” Such a spectacle only gives the public the impression that our withdrawal is being conducted in an irresponsible manner rather than in a way that brings our long campaign to an honorable conclusion.

As the United States pulls its combat forces out of Afghanistan, there will be a need to dispose of a great deal of “surplus” military equipment. Published estimates have run as high as \$7 billion worth of material---- about 20 percent of what the U.S. military has in Afghanistan — that is no longer needed or would be too costly to ship back home. But there is a better way to handle this problem than turning useable equipment into rust and dust. It is common to transfer, by sale or otherwise, surplus gear located overseas to friendly foreign governments.

When I led a CODEL to Uzbekistan earlier this year, I was told by our embassy that the Tashkent government had, with embassy guidance, properly filled out the paperwork necessary to make a request for surplus equipment. Uzbekistan is a front line state in the war against the spread of radical Islamist terrorism into Central Asia. We should do what we can to help it defend itself and the region from the jihadist threat emanating mainly from Pakistan. Though its domestic policies fall short of our liberal standards, Uzbekistan does not pose any security threat to U.S. interests.

There is another country that also deserves our attention when it comes time to the transfer military gear: India. I have talked to Indian diplomats and there is an interest in obtaining American equipment that can be used in counterinsurgency operations. India has long been a target of terrorism and insurgency, much of it state-sponsored by Pakistan. Pakistan has also been a major factor supporting the Taliban in Afghanistan. Its ambitions to the north are feared by Uzbekistan as are its ambitions to the east by India.

It is in our interest to help India face its security threats. Indeed, I was concerned when I learned that some equipment, including mine-resistant armored trucks (MRAP), had been offered to Pakistan. Yet, if surplus equipment has been offered to a "partner" who has been as unreliable and untrustworthy as Pakistan, there can certainly be no objection to transferring military gear to India, a country with whom our security interests align. And India is in a much better position to operate and maintain advanced American equipment than is Pakistan.

As I write this, you have been attending the fourth U.S.-India Strategic Dialogue in New Delhi. You noted we "share a very specific and similar vision for peace, democracy, and stability in Asia" with India; and you thanked India for its investments in Afghanistan. We should be willing to show our appreciation with more than words.

It will be up to friendly nations in the region to maintain security and stability after our combat forces depart in 2014. We need to do what we can to improve their capabilities. Providing them with our surplus equipment makes far more strategic sense than the waste of tax payer money involved in junking it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dana Rohrabacher". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Dana Rohrabacher
Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe,
Eurasia and Emerging Threats