

Untitled document

By James Pindell

*WMUR-TV, November 14, 2011*

Republican Congressman Charlie Bass returned from Afghanistan, saying that if the American efforts there were to ever find a definition of success, Afghanis have to take over their country and Pakistan has to become a partner.

Bass, of Peterborough, was in Afghanistan and Oman last week, meeting with commanders and New Hampshire troops on the ground.

"In speaking with and observing U.S. troops, it is clear that they understand our mission and believe in it," Bass said. Bass said the mission, according those on the ground, is moving away from a counter insurgency effort to a law enforcement effort.

He was skeptical on what role President Hamid Karzai could have in helping with this transition, given that he believes Karzai "is confined to his palace."

The real test then will be seeing what the Afghani people want themselves.

"The Afghanis have to want to win this war," Bass said.

This is not to suggest that all this will be enough.

"If this operation is ever going to be a success, then there has to be a different paradigm with Pakistan," he said.

Pakistan has had a complicated relationship with the United States as of late. At times, Pakistan served as a partner against terrorists, and they have become dependent on American foreign aid. At other times, the nation has been nearly hostile to the United States, and it was the place where Osama bin Laden lived until Americans stormed his compound without permission from the Pakistani government.

Even though much of what is shaping Pakistan is internal, Bass said he wants to see Afghanistan build its border with Pakistan stronger.

During the trip, the Bass delegation met with several high-ranking military and diplomatic officials, including U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker, Commander of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and U.S. Forces in Afghanistan General John Allen, and Major General John Toolen, Commander of the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force. The Delegation visited Kabul and Kandahar and reviewed training of the Afghan Security Forces.