

# Senator Bob Casey talks Afghanistan, IED's with USAWC students

*Thomas Zimmerman, Army War College Public Affairs Office*

## Senator Bob Casey talks Afghanistan, IED's with USAWC students



*View a video of the remarks on the [USAWC YouTube page](#)*

*U.S. Senator Bob Casey spoke to Army War College students and faculty Sept. 9 about the U.S. efforts in Afghanistan and the threat posed by ammonium nitrate, the key ingredient used in IEDs. Photo by Megan Clugh.*

Sept. 9, 2010 -- Senator Bob Casey (D-PA) spoke about the U.S. efforts in Afghanistan to the future senior leaders who will be charged with responsibilities in the region during a talk in Bliss Hall at the Army War College today.

“I’m grateful for this opportunity and thankful for everything that each one of you has done in this room to protect our freedoms,” he said. “I also come here with great humility. Every one of you could provide me with specific strategic insights to issues that would take me years to learn otherwise.”

During his remarks, Casey highlighted several challenges facing the U.S. in Afghanistan: corruption in the Afghan government, training progress for the Afghan National Army and the police force and the importance of development initiatives. He also highlighted his work on the international effort to address the threat posed by ammonium nitrate, the key ingredient used in improvised explosive devices.

“Severe corruption has nationwide implications and could serve to undermine the totality of our effort in Afghanistan,” he said. “Our troops are fighting and dying to help extend the reach of the Afghan government outside of Kabul, to show the Afghan people that its government has a monopoly on the use of force and is capable of providing goods and services to its people. I will put this very simply: we cannot be complicit in helping extend the reach of a corrupt government.”

Casey also voiced concern over the training of the Afghan National Army.

“While we have made progress in training the ANA over the past year, I have serious concerns that training is not happening fast enough,” he said. “This is an urgent mission. The sooner that Afghanistan can develop a sound military infrastructure, especially a competent officer corps, it will lessen the burden on international forces operating in the country.

“But equally as important, it will result in an institution that the Afghan people can rally around. It will help to build solidarity among the Afghan people and confidence that the government is capable of developing the key institutions of the state.”

Col. Tom Vaccaro and Lt. Col. Jayson Altieri are two members of the USAWC Class of 2011 who know first-hand the issues Casey.

“Every point and issue he brought up are valid concerns for us in this region,” said Vaccaro, who returned from Afghanistan in late 2009. “Through our actions and operations we are trying to win the hearts and minds of the Afghan people, which doesn’t just happen overnight. That’s why the lessons we are taught here at the Army War College are so important, this is a complex issues that will take time to solve.”

Altieri, who returned from Afghanistan in July, agreed.

“We realize the complexity of this issue and opportunities like this to see how our elected officials view an issue are very important to our development as strategic leaders,” he said. “You need to look at issues from the political, economic and military issues to truly understand it.”

Casey focused attention on the availability of ammonium nitrate which is IEDs. Casey sponsored a resolution which has passed the Senate that called for increased support to combat ammonium nitrate and an increased effort and focus by the Governments of Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Central Asian countries to effectively monitor and regulate the manufacture, sale, transport and use of ammonium nitrate fertilizer.



*Casey talks with Maj. Gen. Gregg Martin, USAWC commandant, in his office while Amb. Carol van Voorst, Deputy Commandant for International Affairs, looks on. Photo by Megan Clugh.*

In January 2010, the Afghan government banned the use of and manufacture of



ammonium nitrate as a fertilizer. However, he said, ammonium nitrate continues to flow into Afghanistan from Pakistan, Central Asian countries and Iran.

“I cannot overemphasize the urgency of this issue,” he said. “Pakistan’s leaders must do everything in their power to ensure that ammonium nitrate and other precursor ingredients are well regulated in Pakistan and not transported into Afghanistan for illicit use.”

Casey closed his remarks by thanking the military and civilian leaders for their service.

“You’ve committed your lives to preserving peace and deserve the grateful thanks of the American people,” he said. “Thank you for your firm and steadfast commitment to our nation.”

U.S. Army War College Archives - News Article - 09 September 2010