

**WASHINGTON (1 December)** – U.S. Rep. Gus M. Bilirakis (R-Fla.), a member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, tonight issued the following statement after President Barack Obama detailed his new plan for winning the war in Afghanistan:

“I commend President Obama for recognizing the seriousness of the situation in Afghanistan and heeding General McChrystal's call for additional troops. Providing our military with additional troops and resources is critical to our long-term national security and will help achieve the goal of denying the Taliban and Al-Qaeda a staging ground for future attacks. My hope is that the extra forces will be utilized in a manner consistent with the strategy outlined by General McChrystal earlier this year. In addition, it is imperative that the Afghan people have confidence in both their new government and American resolve to stabilize the region.

“While the Administration must set clear benchmarks for the Afghan government to speed up the training of their own forces, we absolutely should not commit ourselves to artificial time lines which have our brave men and women departing Afghanistan independent of the realities on the ground. Telegraphing when our forces will leave the region emboldens our enemies and compromises the diplomatic and military progress which has been made.”

**NOTE:** Bilirakis met with General Stanley McChrystal when he visited Afghanistan during August as a part of a Congressional Delegation and will take part in a House Committee on Foreign Affairs hearing about U.S. Strategy in Afghanistan featuring Secretary of State Clinton and Secretary of Defense Gates on Wednesday afternoon.