

**Washington, DC** – Congressman Rob Wittman (VA-1) returned Monday from a five-day trip to the Middle East, with visits to Pakistan and Afghanistan to visit U.S. troops, to engage with regional leaders on civil, political, and military matters and to explore opportunities to continue to strengthen partnerships with the two countries. Wittman led the congressional delegation, comprised of five members of the House Armed Services Committee, Virginia Congressman Scott Rigell, as well as Congressmen Todd Young (IN-9), Larry Kissel (NC-8) and Dave Loebsack (IA-2).

“With both countries, we not only share common interests such as combating terrorism and furthering economic development, but recognize the necessity of working toward an enduring peace in the region that ultimately benefits the entire world community,” Wittman said.

In Pakistan, the members met with Chief of Army Staff General Kayani, Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari, and local Parliamentarians. Wittman noted the great personal sacrifice they have endured as they bring peace and stability to their country.

During the visit to Afghanistan, members visited with local and national leaders, visited a number of U.S. Regional Commands, and received an in-depth briefing from General David Petraeus, Commander of International Security Assistance Force and U.S. Forces Afghanistan, focused on transition plans.

Wittman continued, “In Afghanistan, we observed marked progress, particularly since my last visit in November 2010. In fact, if it weren’t for a sandstorm in Kandahar, we would have been able to visit areas that were until recently under Taliban control. However, many challenges remain to ensure that such progress is sustainable. We could not have been more impressed by our men and women in uniform, along with their civilian and coalition partners, who have dedicated their lives to winning the war in Afghanistan – there is no doubt that their combined efforts are directly responsible for the achievements made in Afghanistan on every front.”

During the visit, members also had the opportunity to meet with service members from Virginia. Wittman was able to meet with 10 soldiers from the Commonwealth and hear firsthand of their experiences and opinions on the ground in theater.