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# Bishops advise US on issues in Afghanistan

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**WASHINGTON** -- Long-term development and humanitarian assistance, protecting civilians and dealing with the root causes of terrorism should be among the guiding principles of how the United States deals with problems in Afghanistan and Pakistan, said the chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on International Justice and Peace.

tIn a letter dated Oct. 6 and released Oct. 9, Bishop Howard J. Hubbard of Albany, N.Y., offered the advice to retired Marine Gen. James L. Jones, the national security adviser, as the administration reviews U.S. strategy in the region.

Bishop Hubbard acknowledged that the U.S. bishops are not military experts, but, in light of the implications for regional and international security, he said they wanted to offer some principles of Catholic teaching and experience that might help inform policy choices.
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t"In the face of terrorist threats, we know that our nation must respond to indiscriminate attacks against innocent civilians in ways that combine a resolve to do what is necessary, the restraint to ensure that we act justly and the vision to focus on broader issues of poverty and injustice that are unscrupulously exploited by terrorists in gaining recruits," Bishop Hubbard wrote.
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tHe directed Jones to the pastoral letter written by the bishops shortly after the 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, which included criteria for moral discernment and a call to solidarity.
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t"In that statement we warned, 'Probability of success is particularly difficult to measure in dealing with an amorphous, global terrorist network. Therefore, special attention must be given to developing criteria for when it is appropriate to end military action in Afghanistan,'" he noted. Among the principles the bishops offered at that time were to:
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- "Restrain use of military force and ensure that civilians are not targeted."
- "Address the root causes of terrorism rather than relying solely on military means to avoid conflict."
- "Encourage international collaboration to provide humanitarian assistance and rebuild Afghanistan."

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With some military leaders now voicing the view that the success of U.S. operations in Afghanistan cannot come from military measures alone, Bishop Hubbard said guidance from the earlier message seems applicable to the current situation.

tIn particular, he urged the administration to consider:

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- Reviewing the use of military force -- when force is necessary to protect the innocent and resist terrorism -- to ensure it is proportionate.
- Developing criteria for when it is appropriate to end military action.
- Focusing more on diplomacy, humanitarian assistance and long-term development, particularly agricultural programs.
- Strengthening local governance and local groups' participation in planning their own development.
- Encouraging international support to foster effective national and local governments.

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tBishop Hubbard cited the church's experience in Afghanistan, through the work of Catholic Relief Services on agriculture, water, income generation, education and health.
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t"CRS' ability to develop local partnerships, involving people in examining their needs and determining priorities, has meant that those communities have a greater commitment to their own development, as well as protecting CRS programs and staff," he wrote.
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tThe approach of CRS, the U.S. bishops' overseas relief and development agency, "exemplifies how long-term efforts can lead to sustainable development and contribute to improved security," he said.
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tThe bishops understand the demands of security while carrying out humanitarian aid and development projects, he said. "But too much development assistance appears to be directed to short-term security objectives or channeled through the military," he noted.
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t"These funds, often used for building projects with little community involvement, are less effective in building stable communities and meeting the legitimate needs of Afghan citizens," Bishop Hubbard wrote. "Whenever possible, U.S. policy and funding should more clearly delineate and differentiate foreign assistance provided through military channels versus civilian channels."

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