

**OPENING STATEMENT
SENATOR RICHARD G. LUGAR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
HEARING ON AFGHANISTAN
FEBRUARY 12, 2003**

Today the Committee meets to review U.S. policy towards Afghanistan and our ongoing efforts to assist that country in recovering from the damage incurred under the rule of the Taliban, and from former tenants such as Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda.

In the months ahead, the United States will be focusing increased attention on threats posed by Iraq and North Korea, but we cannot abandon our commitments or lose sight of our goals in Afghanistan. The international community will take notice of our staying power in Afghanistan. If we are able to help Afghanistan transition into a secure democracy, we will bolster our ability to attract allies in the war against terrorism. Our commitment to Afghanistan is also a demonstration of how we will approach post-conflict Iraq. American credibility is on the line in these situations, and we must understand that failure to follow through could have extremely negative consequences on the war on terror.

While military experts have been saying for some months that the war against the Taliban and Al Qaeda is winding down, American troops remain in harm's way. Estimates suggest that as many as 1,000 Al Qaeda fighters remain active inside Afghanistan. Most recently, allied forces took action at Spin Buldak, in eastern Afghanistan; and just two weeks ago, four American Marines were killed when their Blackhawk helicopter crashed seven miles from Bagram airbase. To date, 47 American service members have lost their lives since operations in Afghanistan began last fall.

In addition to on-going military operations, the United States is leading the way in the reconstruction and revitalization of Afghanistan. More than two million refugees have already returned; crops are being planted; mines are being cleared; children are returning to school; and women are emerging as a critical force in the future of Afghanistan. We should be proud of what has been accomplished thus far under very difficult circumstances.

Early on, President Bush announced that the United States would "not just simply leave after a military objective has been achieved." In response to the President's commitment, the United States provided more than \$500 million in humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan in Fiscal Year 2002. I am hopeful that the Afghanistan Freedom Support Act, which Congress passed last year, will accelerate the already substantial progress being made in Afghanistan.

Despite this progress, the challenges ahead are daunting. While humanitarian aid and emergency assistance have been generous, the recent fighting in the south and the continued control of warlords in various locales demonstrate the fragility of the situation in Afghanistan.

The United States is taking the lead in training a new Afghan National Army. But this is a slow process. In the meantime, security in Afghanistan depends upon U.S. military power and the

International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

The ISAF was created by the Bonn Agreement and has reached its agreed strength of 4,900 troops. But the need to expand the ISAF, and issues surrounding its leadership and force levels continue to be topics of debate. I agree with those who suggest that the ISAF must expand its area of operations beyond the capital. The need to maintain security, distribute aid, and establish the credibility of the interim government exists throughout the country, not just in Kabul. Furthermore, the challenge of finding nations willing and able to lead the ISAF is becoming increasingly difficult. The United Kingdom and Turkey have previously led the Force, and Germany and the Netherlands recently took co-command. But efforts to identify a follow-up leader have thus far been unsuccessful.

Late last year, the Defense Department announced plans to establish eight “Joint Regional Teams,” composed of U.S. combat and civil affairs officers, in order to provide security for reconstruction efforts and to help extend the Afghan government’s reach into the countryside. This is an important initiative, but it cannot fully compensate for the value of an expanded ISAF.

The issue of counter-narcotics is closely linked with the overall security situation in Afghanistan. Experts report that as much as \$1 billion in heroin is being shipped out of the country each year. A large portion of these profits are lining the pockets of some of the same warlords who are threatening the stability of the Karzai government. The United States must formulate a long-term plan to address the threats associated with narco-trafficking. I am hopeful that the Administration will submit to Congress a plan of action to address these threats.

With this in mind, I look forward to hearing from our witnesses – not only on the successes achieved to date but on the Administration’s future plans and policies for Afghanistan, specifically those to be achieved through the Afghan Freedom Support Act.

Before turning to Senator Biden for his opening statement, I would like to welcome today’s witnesses. First we will hear from David Johnson, the State Department’s Coordinator for Afghanistan, and then from Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, Peter Rodman, on U.S. policies and plans. We are especially pleased that Afghanistan’s Ambassador to the United States, Ishaq Shahyar, will join us to provide an Afghan perspective.

Finally, let me point out that this hearing represents the first in a series designed to investigate reconstruction efforts and the ongoing security challenges in Afghanistan. Upon the Senate’s return from recess, the committee will host a meeting with Chairman Hamid Karzai. Dr. Karzai has provided important leadership to Afghanistan at a critical time in its history. We look forward to receiving him and listening to his recommendations.

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