

U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Dick Lugar opening statement for hearing with Secretary of State Colin Powell April 29, 2003

Today the Foreign Relations Committee is very pleased to welcome Secretary of State Powell. Members are anxious to hear your views on the status of our alliances, the Bush Administration's plans for Iraq, the developing situations in the Middle East region and on the Korean Peninsula, and your estimates of the State Department's role in these critical endeavors.

This hearing begins an extraordinary month of activity for the Foreign Relations Committee. Tomorrow we will meet to consider a resolution of ratification to expand the NATO Alliance to include Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. I am confident that the Senate will pass the Protocols of Accession for all seven candidates prior to President Bush's scheduled trip to Europe later this Spring. On Thursday we will hold a hearing on the President's nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs and we will hold a coffee for President Uribe of Colombia. As early as this week, we may begin floor consideration of the State Department Authorization bill. Next week we plan to take NATO expansion to the floor, and the following week we intend to mark up a Foreign Assistance Authorization bill. Depending on the floor schedule, we also hope to complete action on legislation to fight the global HIV/AIDS pandemic. All this must be done while the Committee evaluates and responds to the evolving situations in Iraq, North Korea, Afghanistan, and other regional hot spots.

Secretary Powell, when you were last before our Committee in early February, our nation stood at the brink of war with Iraq. Since that time, the intransigence and depravity of the regime of Saddam Hussein has led to its own destruction. Our military forces, led by President Bush and joined by many coalition partners, executed a swift and decisive battle plan that ejected the Iraqi government from power. All of us commend the skill, bravery, and humanity of our armed forces in executing this plan.

Despite our satisfaction over the outcome of the combat phase of the war, we must recognize that we are probably closer to the beginning than to the end of our endeavors in Iraq. I have stated that it may take up to five years of effort by coalition countries in Iraq to fully achieve our goals of stability, reconstruction, disarmament, and democratization. This Committee has been particularly interested in hearing from the Administration about its long-term strategy towards Iraq.

Given substantial funding requirements and the need to inform the American people of the magnitude of the burdens to come, Congress and the Administration must work closely together if we are to succeed in Iraq. I think many Foreign Relations Committee members would share my opinion that this inter-branch partnership has yet to materialize. This Committee has many questions for which we have received few answers. Congress provided emergency supplemental funding for relief and reconstruction efforts in Iraq. We have not yet been consulted or informed, however, about the Administration's plans for use of these funds. We continue to strive to determine the distribution of duties between various departments and agencies within the U.S. Government for reconstruction

activities and to identify the strategy for coordinating U.S. efforts with those of foreign governments and international organizations.

Our military forces and reconstruction teams are facing numerous hurdles in Iraq. Challenges include the rise of the Shiite majority, the infiltration of Iranian agents, unilateral statements of authority by various Iraqi nationals, the omnipresent threat of terrorist acts, re-establishing electricity and water service, securing Iraqi antiquities, creating a police force to keep the peace, fairly and effectively distributing food and medicine, and securing Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and those with knowledge of them. Over the long term, the challenges of developing a constitution and establishing an Iraqi government that is independent, stable, and self-sufficient are enormous. Our policies must be clear, transparent, and discussed in terms of long-term security for the people of Iraq and the Middle East.

Even as we focus on Iraq, we realize that the events of the last several months have sharply altered our relationships with allies and the entire international community. The application of overwhelming U.S. military power in Iraq has changed the calculations of some of our opponents. Meanwhile differences over the U.S. approach to Iraq and revelations that some of our allies may have assisted Saddam Hussein's government have chilled relations with long-time friends.

It is in this context that the Committee will vote tomorrow on the expansion of NATO. In doing so, we will re-affirm the utility and necessity of our alliance relationships. But we are cognizant that some of these relationships have suffered very deep wounds. Secretary Powell, as the principal U.S. negotiator with foreign governments, we are anxious to hear from you on the status of our alliances. How can these relationships be repaired and how can we ensure that military and economic burdens related to Iraq, Afghanistan, and the global war on terrorism do not fall overwhelmingly on the United States?

As we expand NATO, we also must retool it, so that it can be a mechanism of burden sharing and mutual security in the war on terrorism. NATO should not be circumscribed by geographic boundaries when the principal threat against all alliance members is global in nature. Last week NATO announced its intention to take over leadership of the ISAF in Afghanistan. I applaud this move and congratulate the Administration on a crucial step toward peace and stability in Afghanistan. Although NATO is not in a position at this time to perform the same role in Iraq, a strong commitment by individual NATO nations to contribute to long-term peacekeeping and humanitarian duties in Iraq would help heal Alliance divisions and reaffirm its relevance.

Mr. Secretary, it is a pleasure to have you with us today. We look forward to your insights on these matters and to the chance to engage you in a dialogue on the Administration's global strategic vision.

###