

Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
Senator Richard G. Lugar
Opening Statement for the Nomination of Zalmay Khalilzad
March 15, 2007

Today, we once again welcome our friend, Zalmay Khalilzad, who has been nominated by President Bush to be Ambassador to the United Nations. This post is unique among diplomatic assignments in that its occupant is responsible not only for conducting diplomacy on many of the most critical foreign policy issues of the day, but also for U.S. stewardship of a multi-lateral institution that plays a central role in global affairs. This Committee and others in Congress have spent much time examining how the United States can work cooperatively with partners at the U.N. to streamline its bureaucracy, improve its transparency, and make it more efficient as it undertakes vital missions. We all hope for a United Nations that can fulfill its potential as a forum for international problem-solving and dispute resolution. Often the United Nations has fallen short of our hopes, but we cannot afford to be discouraged.

The new Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon of South Korea, has an opportunity to implement reforms outlined by the Gingrich-Mitchell report and countless other studies. To date, Secretary General Ban has put forward some important reforms that would raise the accountability of the organization and better enable the United Nations to shift resources and personnel to initiatives requiring immediate attention. Additionally, he has set an early example of transparency by releasing his personal financial documents.

But as the Foreign Relations Committee knows well, U.N. reform is not an easy task. Many diplomats and bureaucrats in New York see almost any structural reform of the U.N. as an attempt to diminish their prerogatives. The next U.S. ambassador must be dedicated to building on President Bush's efforts to support meaningful reform at the U.N.

The performance of the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva continues to be a source of concern in the Congress and among the American people. Regrettably, recent sessions of the Council have focused almost exclusively on Israel. The United States rightfully continues to seek modifications to the Human Rights Council. Much less well-known is the role of the United Nations Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Affairs Committee in New York, which has voted to condemn the deplorable human rights situations in Iran, North Korea, Belarus, and Burma – countries which the Human Rights Council in Geneva has inexplicably ignored. I would be interested in knowing what options the nominee sees, at this stage, for improving the structure and credibility of human rights advocacy at the United Nations.

Even with these difficulties, the United Nations remains a key component of U.S. foreign policy. In particular, U.N. peacekeeping missions are a cost-effective method of enforcing peace and helping shattered societies re-build. The ability of U.N. peacekeeping missions to be a force-multiplier was underscored by a 2006 General Accounting Office analysis of the U.N.'s peacekeeping mission in Haiti. The GAO concluded: "The U.N. budgeted \$428 million for the first 14 months of the mission. A U.S. operation of the same size and duration would have cost an estimated \$876 million." The report noted that the U.S. contribution to the Haiti peacekeeping mission was \$116 million – roughly one-eighth the cost of a unilateral American operation.

With this in mind, I was perplexed to see that the Administration's FY 2008 budget request asks for approximately \$300 million less for peacekeeping than in the previous year. Little evidence was presented to explain why the current sixteen missions would suddenly require less funding than in previous years. Moreover, additional peacekeeping missions may arise in Chad and Darfur, further straining the peacekeeping budget. I would welcome the nominee's thoughts on this situation, which requires further explanation by the Administration.

The diplomatic challenges that would face our nominee include the nuclear confrontations with Iran and North Korea; the spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases; refugee crises related to Iraq, Darfur, and other locations; and numerous other problems that confront the United Nations every day.

I am pleased that the President has nominated a diplomat with such wide experience to be our next Ambassador to the U.N. Ambassador Khalilzad has been in charge of two of the toughest assignments in American diplomacy – our embassies in Kabul and Baghdad. His experience in these posts will enhance our ability to work with the U.N. on issues pertaining to Afghanistan and Iraq and bolster our international diplomacy aimed at stabilizing those nations.

I welcome the nominee and thank him for his continued service to our country.

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