

Dick Lugar

U.S. Senator for Indiana

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Opening Statement for Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey & Yemen Nominations

U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member Dick Lugar made the following statement at today's hearing.

I join the Chairman in welcoming our four distinguished ambassadorial nominees. We thank each of them for their ongoing service and their courage in taking on these challenging assignments.

I saw Ambassador Jeffrey and Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki in Ankara last summer when I attended the Nabucco pipeline treaty signing. Ambassador Jeffrey and I had the opportunity to discuss the important strategic, political, and economic benefits of fostering energy cooperation throughout the region.

While making fewer headlines, the situation in Iraq continues to be vital to the national security of the United States. Iraq held parliamentary elections on March 7, 2009, but an agreement on who will be the Prime Minister may not be concluded for several months. The redeployment of American forces in Iraq has begun, and by September, all but 50,000 U.S. troops will have departed the country. President Obama has said that by the end of 2011, all U.S. troops will be out of Iraq.

Plans submitted by the Administration suggest that U.S. involvement in Iraq will remain robust well beyond that, with more than 5,000 diplomats and civilian advisers working with civil society and the Iraqi government. The uncertain political situation creates risks for our transition plans. Our military has been involved in areas of governance far beyond security, and turning over those critical responsibilities will be challenging.

The State Department has asked for more than \$800 million in start-up costs for a police mentoring and training program. The program envisions having 350 advisors at three camps who will fan out to 50 sites in the country, about half of which would be reachable by ground and the rest requiring air support. With the military's departure, we are told, the Department may hire as many as 7,000 contract security personnel. An AP article last month suggested the Iraq mission would need the equivalent of a squadron of Blackhawk helicopters, 50 ambush-protected vehicles, and equipment to protect against rockets and mortars. It is important that the Administration flesh out how all the pieces of this unprecedented operation will fit together in Iraq as American troops depart.

We also are considering the nomination of Frank Riccardione to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Turkey. Turkey remains a vital partner for the United States, despite several recent disagreements. Our next ambassador must continue to develop opportunities to reinvigorate the U.S.-Turkish alliance. One such opportunity concerns energy security and the development of the Nabucco pipeline as a southern energy corridor to Europe. Completion of the Nabucco project will directly connect nations of the Caspian region, the Caucasus and Europe, bringing energy diversification that will benefit supply, transit, and consumer countries alike.

Ms. Connelly, in mid-May the Committee met with Prime Minister Saad Hariri. Members engaged him on the full range of issues and expressed particular concern about the lack of progress on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701. On June 8, Senator Casey's subcommittee held a hearing that highlighted the intransigence of Hezbollah, which continues to act counter to Lebanese interests and regional stability and poses a daily threat to peace. Our Ambassador to Lebanon is a key figure in persuading the Hariri government to

withstand the counter-pressures and support the programs in which Americans have invested more than \$1 billion since 2006.

Terrorists have struck Americans in Yemen, and we require a clearly articulated policy for curbing the terrorist threat there. I am hopeful Mr. Fierstein will provide perspective about our strategy. His experience in Pakistan may be enlightening, particularly as he attempts to gain a better understanding of what is happening in Yemen outside the capital. What programs and leverage are we attempting to apply, particularly in a country with so many basic problems?

I thank the nominees again, and look forward to their insights into these and other issues.

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