

Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Chairman Richard Lugar
Opening Statement for Hearing
on
IRAQ TRANSITION – THE WAY AHEAD (PART II)
MAY 19, 2004

Six weeks from today the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq will turn over sovereignty to an Iraqi government. With that deadline in mind, the Committee on Foreign Relations meets to further explore the Administration's plans for this transition. Yesterday, Deputy Secretary Armitage and Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz answered questions on many aspects of our Iraq policy. Despite difficult challenges ahead, both noted progress in preparing for Iraqi governance.

This is the sixth hearing the Foreign Relations Committee has held on Iraq in the last month and the twentieth since January 2003. We are hopeful that these hearings will enlighten the American people, as well as stimulate thinking within our government and the Coalition about creative policies that will optimize our prospects for success.

Secretary of State Powell reflected the perspective of many Americans about Iraq last weekend when he said: "The United States is not anxious to keep our troops there any longer than we have to... We want to finish our job, turn full sovereignty over to the Iraqi people, see them elect a government that is fully representative of the people... and let us come back home as fast as we possibly can... But we're also not going to leave while the Iraqi people still need us, and while the interim government or the transitional government still sees a need for our presence."

With lives being lost and billions of dollars being spent in Iraq, the American people must be confident that we have carefully thought through an Iraq policy. A detailed plan is necessary to prove to our allies and to Iraqis that we have a strategy and that we are committed to making it work. If we cannot provide this clarity, we risk the loss of support of the American people, the loss of potential contributions from our allies, and the disillusionment of Iraqis.

Achieving a positive outcome in Iraq is a vital national security priority. The appalling revelations about prisoner abuse in Iraq have added to the stakes, because they have hurt our reputation in the Middle East and the international community. As we pursue the noble goals of independence and security in Iraq, the deeds we perform must be consistent with our words about freedom, democracy, human rights and accountability.

As we discussed yesterday, we must use every tool at our disposal to ensure that the transition to Iraqi sovereignty succeeds, and we should make every effort to accelerate stabilization and reconstruction in Iraq. Once the new caretaker government is named by UN Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi, the transition to sovereignty should begin immediately.

It is vital that we put an Iraqi face on the governance of that country. The Iraqi people must have a visible role in securing the country, organizing elections, and managing reconstruction. The most effective way to make this happen is for elections to take place as quickly as possible. If national elections can be accelerated for the Transitional and Permanent

Iraqi governments -- scheduled for January and December 2005 respectively -- we should move up the timetable. In the meantime, we should push forward with as many elections at the provincial, municipal, and neighborhood level as possible. Yesterday, Secretary Armitage underscored that local elections are taking place and are making a positive difference in the attitudes of Iraqis.

Accelerating completion of a new United Nations Security Council resolution also could help give international legitimacy to the new Iraqi government and clarify new security arrangements. We want to hear from our witnesses today about what a Security Council Resolution should contain and whether opportunities will emerge after the transition of sovereignty to broaden the international coalition working in Iraq.

Our Committee also has closely followed the management of reconstruction funds appropriated by Congress. I noted yesterday that only \$2.3 billion out of the \$18.4 billion appropriated for Iraqi reconstruction in the November 2003 Emergency Supplemental had been obligated by March 24. We would like our witnesses to comment on whether they see legitimate reasons for the slow pace of reconstruction activities. Can the Coalition move more swiftly and efficiently in this area, given that delays in reconstruction undercut U.S. credibility and increase suspicions among Iraqis who are impatient for improvements?

We are pleased to have a distinguished panel of experts today to help us assess the way ahead in Iraq. We welcome Dr. Anthony Cordesman, holder of the Arleigh Burke Chair in Strategy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies; Dr. Phebe Marr, an author and former Senior Fellow at the National Defense University; Dr. Larry Diamond, Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institute; and General Joseph Hoar, former Commander in Chief of U.S. Central Command. Our witnesses each have written extensively on Iraq, and we look forward to their insights and recommendations.

###