

Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
Senator Richard G. Lugar, Chairman
Opening Statement for
Nomination Hearing of John Bolton
April 7, 2005

The Foreign Relations Committee meets today to consider President George W. Bush's nomination of John Bolton to be U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. Mr. Bolton has served the last four years as the Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Affairs. In this capacity, he has played an important role in several of the Bush Administration's most notable diplomatic successes, including the President's Proliferation Security Initiative, the Moscow Treaty, the G-8 Global Partnership Against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, and the opening of Libya's WMD programs. Secretary Bolton also served for four years in the administration of George H.W. Bush as the Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations. In this position, he was heavily involved in matters related to the United Nations, including UN financing and reform proposals. He also assisted former Secretary of State James Baker in his role as the Secretary General's Personal Envoy for the Western Sahara.

In announcing this nomination, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stated: "John Bolton is personally committed to the future success of the United Nations, and he will be a strong voice for reform at a time when the United Nations has begun to reform itself to help meet the challenging agenda before the international community."

Perhaps no organization is so frequently oversimplified by both its proponents and detractors as the United Nations. The UN is not a monolithic entity controlled by a Secretary General. Rather, it is a complex collection of agencies, programs, diplomatic venues, traditions, and agreements that depend on the actions of its individual member states. As such, the various parts of the UN often work independently from one another with little coordination or oversight. The UN has produced great accomplishments, even as some of its structures have experienced episodes of corruption, mismanagement, contentiousness, or timidity. Some agencies and programs, like the World Health Organization, the World Food Program, and UNICEF have a proven record of achievement and are trusted by people and nations around the world. Other endeavors like the Oil-for-Food Program and the UN Commission on Human Rights have been gravely flawed and have suffered from severe organizational deficiencies.

The Foreign Relations Committee held the first Congressional hearing on the UN's Oil-for-Food scandal a year ago this month. At that hearing, I said "Billions of dollars that should have been spent on humanitarian needs in Iraq were siphoned off by Saddam Hussein's regime through a system of surcharges, bribes, and kickbacks. This corruption was not solely a product of Saddam Hussein's machinations. He depended upon members of the U.N. Security Council who were willing to be complicit in his activities, and he needed U.N. officials and contractors who were dishonest, inattentive, or willing to make damaging compromises in pursuit of a compassionate mission." During the last year, we have learned much more about the extent of the corruption and mismanagement involved, and this knowledge has supported the case for reform.

United Nations reform is not a new issue. The structure and role of the United Nations have been debated in our country almost continuously since the UN was established in 1945. But in 2005, we may have a unique opportunity to improve the operations of the UN. The revelations of the Oil-For-Food scandal and the urgency of strengthening global cooperation to address terrorism, the AIDS crisis, nuclear proliferation, and many other international problems have created momentum in favor of constructive reforms at the UN. Secretary General Kofi Annan has proposed a substantial reform plan that will provide a platform for further reform initiatives and discussions.

The United States must be a leader in the effort to improve the United Nations, particularly its accountability. At a time when the United States is appealing for greater international help in Iraq, in Afghanistan, and in trouble spots around the world, a diminishment of UN credibility because of scandal reduces U.S. options and increases our own burdens.

Secretary Bolton has thought a great deal about this subject, and we are anxious to listen to his ideas for reform, as well as his evaluation of the Secretary General's plan. We want to know what specific parts of that plan

deserve U.S. support. Beyond substantive evaluations, we want to know how the nominee intends to pursue these reform ideas. What strategies does he propose for making constructive changes a reality? How will he apply his substantial experience in this area?

Even as reform must be a priority, the world will not stop while we attempt to improve the structures of the UN. The next U.S. Ambassador to the UN must pursue reform without diminishing the effectiveness of his core diplomatic mission -- namely, securing greater international support for the national security and foreign policy objectives of the United States. During the last several months, President Bush and Secretary Rice have undertaken important missions designed to reinvigorate relationships with allies and partners. This is an urgent national security imperative that cannot be neglected by the next Ambassador to the UN.

The United States does not possess infinite financial and military resources. We need help to advance security, democracy, and human rights. This fact should not preclude us from taking unilateral action when it is in our national interest, but it does require that we be persistent and imaginative in our pursuit of international support.

The nomination of Secretary Bolton to be Ambassador to the United Nations has generated public debate on U.S. policies toward the United Nations and on the degree to which the United States should embrace multilateralism. In this context, opponents have criticized some statements of the nominee as abrasive, confrontational, and insensitive. Some of these same statements have been celebrated by supporters of the nominee as demonstrating a tough-minded, refreshingly blunt approach to diplomacy.

But in the diplomatic world, neither bluntness nor rhetorical sensitivity is a virtue in itself. There are times when blunt talk serves a policy purpose. Other times it does not. When President Ronald Reagan stood before the Brandenburg Gate in 1987, and said "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall," blunt speech was serving a carefully planned diplomatic purpose. It reflected broader themes of democracy that had been nurtured for years by the Reagan administration. It reaffirmed to Germans on both sides of the Wall that the United States would have staying power in Europe. It underscored to the Kremlin in a personal, tangible way that the United States and its allies were intent on achieving the peaceful transformation of Eastern Europe. Blunt as it was, there was nothing gratuitous about President Reagan's statement.

Diplomatic speech by any high ranking administration official has policy consequences. It should never be undertaken simply to score international debating points, to appeal to segments of U.S. public opinion, or to validate a personal point of view. As President John Kennedy once said: "The purpose of foreign policy is not to provide an outlet for our own sentiments of hope or indignation; it is to shape real events in a real world."

I believe that diplomats serving under the President and Secretary of State can apply a basic three part test to almost anything they utter in a diplomatic context. First, is the statement true? Second, is the statement consistent with the policies and directives of the President and the Secretary of State? Third, is there a rational expectation that the statement will advance or support U.S. interests? It is particularly important that the statements of our ambassadors to the UN meet this test, because -- more so than any other American ambassadors -- they are perceived as speaking directly for the President of the United States.

President Bush has selected John Bolton, a nominee of experience and accomplishment, to be his spokesman and representative at the United Nations. Given the importance of this position, it is vital that we act both expeditiously and thoroughly in evaluating the nominee. We look forward to hearing the nominee's insights and learning how he will work on behalf of the President and the Secretary of State in fulfilling this duty.

###