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U.S. Senator for Indiana

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Lugar Statement for SFRC Afghanistan Strategies Hearing

Below is the opening statement by U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member Dick Lugar at today's hearing on Afghanistan strategies:

I welcome our distinguished panel. Having reviewed the range of strategies suggested by our experts, it is evident that each has his own perspective on international military forces in Afghanistan. What they have in common is acknowledging the important role for international civilian agencies in Afghanistan to help create stability.

This hearing provides an opportunity to review progress on a key asset that I have long sought for our foreign policy efforts – a Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization in the State Department. The story of the development of this office, which began under the previous administration and continues today, is a discouraging one. Despite the long-evident need for a coherent and efficient civilian coordination capacity to assist our troops in crisis response, we still don't have one and continue to rely solely upon the Defense Department to provide personnel, equipment, resources, and ideas.

In 2003 I convened a series of Policy Analysis Group meetings of senior officials from within our government and beyond to discuss the appropriate role for civilian agencies in post-conflict or crisis situations. Since 1989 and the fall of the Berlin Wall, we have been engaged in post conflict situations in the first Gulf War, Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti, Kosovo, Iraq, Liberia, and of course, Afghanistan. Each crisis required the deployment of technically proficient civilians familiar with unstable situations. Each situation was hampered by the inability to identify and deploy such skilled civilians either independently or as part of a multi-lateral or military operation.

In 2004, then Senator Biden and I introduced legislation to create a civilian reconstruction office, but that legislation was not championed initially by the previous administration. Belatedly, the value of this effort was recognized, but despite the Bush administration's 2009 budget request of \$249 million to fund the Civilian Stabilization Initiative and the new administration's increased 2010 budget request of \$323 million for the same purposes, Congress has sharply cut these funds.

As a result, as President Obama determines the strategic and tactical approach for Afghanistan and the region, he and his commanders and Ambassadors are constrained by the inability to provide all the tools necessary.

Ambassador Holbrooke was hired by this Administration to improve our policy impact in Afghanistan and Pakistan. He determined that he would need a team of experts and the means to wield decision-making authority over human and financial resources. I would have hoped that by 2009, some six years after I broached the idea with then Secretary of State Colin Powell, Ambassador Holbrooke could turn to the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, Ambassador John Herbst, and an integrated civilian organization capable of assembling a large contingent of specialists. Instead, Ambassador Holbrooke concluded that the capacity of S/CRS was not yet sufficient to perform the mission.

Ambassador Holbrooke has instead established within his own Office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan what is, in essence, a central coordinating function for all civilian agencies involved in this crisis. He has built a team that now competes in size with S/CRS and dwarfs that entity in its ability to empower and deploy personnel.

The Department of Defense shares my concern over this gap in our civilian post-conflict capabilities. A variety of experienced military leaders have said the lack of an effective civilian partner is hurting our national interests. Secretary Gates has made clear that our national security is as dependent upon our foreign assistance budget and authorities as it is on our defense budget. Congress must now prioritize these parallel budgets and authorities in order to strengthen our effectiveness in the realm of diplomacy and defense. Afghanistan is the priority our President has identified. It is in this engagement that we must provide the civilian resources and skills to complement our military effort, whatever shape that military posture may take.

I look forward to hearing our witnesses.

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