



Opening Statement
Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Nomination hearing: John Bolton to be Ambassador to the United Nations
(Day 2) April 12, 2005

As Prepared for Delivery

Mr. Chairman, I am grateful to you for allowing Mr. Ford to appear before us today.

At the outset, I want to emphasize that Mr. Ford is here at my invitation. Several weeks ago, the Democratic staff contacted Mr. Ford to learn what he knew about the incident involving Mr. Westermann. They recommended to me that we invite Mr. Ford.

Mr. Ford is well known to this Committee, not only because he worked on the professional staff of this Committee in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

He served with distinction at the State Department as Assistant Secretary for Intelligence and Research under Secretary Powell, and has had a long and distinguished career at the Departments of State and Defense under Republican presidents.

He knows the intelligence world from all sides, having also been National Intelligence Officer for East Asia, and a regional specialist at CIA. And he was a consumer of intelligence while in senior policy jobs at State and Defense.

I believe he can provide important perspective on the events surrounding Mr. Bolton's efforts to remove Mr. Westermann.

At the very least, it will help us understand what Mr. Bolton was trying to do, because Mr. Bolton's testimony yesterday was hardly illuminating.

He initially said that he "never sought to have Mr. Westermann fired at all." Then I asked him if he attempted to have him removed from his portfolio. He replied that he "mentioned it to Mr. Fingar," and that he "may have mentioned it to one or two other people. But then I shrugged my shoulders and I moved on."

He later said to Senator Dodd that after he received an email from Mr. Fingar on the day of the incident, that “I basically thought the matter was closed when I got Mr. Fingar’s e-mail saying it won’t happen again.”

But that can’t be right, because Mr. Bolton then raised the matter with Carl Ford when Mr. Ford returned to the Department some time later.

Even then, Mr. Bolton still didn’t let it go. Some six months later, he urged another INR official to remove Mr. Westermann.

So I think it important we hear Mr. Ford’s version of these events, so we will have a fuller picture.

I want to reiterate my view that these are very serious matters.

After 9/11 and the debacle over intelligence on Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction program, government officials should not be suppressing dissenting views on intelligence – we should be encouraging them. The last thing we need is “group-think.”