

U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Chairman Richard Lugar
Opening Statement for Hearing on Iraq Reconstruction
May 22, 2003

I am very pleased to welcome Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Peter Pace. We have been looking forward to your testimony and to our discussion of the status, policies, and plans for Iraqi stabilization and reconstruction.

This is the first of several hearings over the next few weeks that the Foreign Relations Committee will hold on Iraq stabilization and reconstruction issues. These hearings are intended to help the Committee perform its oversight function and to inform the American people, whose support is necessary for U.S. efforts in Iraq.

The U.S. military and Coalition forces and the President and his team, including our witnesses today, deserve praise for the execution of a brilliant war plan that brought the combat phase of conflict in Iraq to a decisive and speedy conclusion. We mourn those who lost their lives in this conflict. We recognize the extraordinary care taken to prevent such loss. In fact, the comprehensive planning that went into the military campaign that ousted Saddam Hussein's regime was evident in every aspect of the resounding military victory declared by President Bush on May 1st.

This military success, however, was only the first step in winning the war in Iraq. Victory is at risk unless we ensure that effective post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction efforts in Iraq succeed over the long-term.

The measure of success in Iraq that matters most is what kind of country and institutions we leave behind. Iraq has some important ingredients for success – an educated population, a tradition of trade and industry, and large reserves of oil to benefit its people. The achievement of stability and democracy in Iraq present an opportunity to catalyze change in the region that can greatly improve U.S. national security. Stabilizing and reconstructing Iraq are a key to success in the larger context of the Middle East region and in the global war on terrorism.

Given these stakes, the United States must make a long-term commitment to achieving our objectives in Iraq. A sustained American commitment would heavily influence the political dynamics of the region and reinforce the credibility of U.S. diplomacy around the world.

I am concerned that the Administration's initial stabilization and reconstruction efforts have been inadequate. The planning for peace was much less developed than the planning for war. Moreover, the Administration has not sufficiently involved Congress and the American people in its plans regarding the costs, methods, and goals of reconstructing Iraq. Congress has already voted \$2.5 billion toward the rebuilding effort in Iraq. We've heard estimates that the final bill may be over \$100 billion. I believe the process could take at least five years.

There is little understanding of the Administration's short and mid-term plans and priorities to address increasingly urgent issues such as providing food, water, electricity, and fuel. U.S. and Coalition forces are struggling to create a secure environment to allow civil engineers and humanitarian assistance workers to do their jobs, but there seems to be insufficient military and police forces to establish this security. Given these circumstances, talk of a reduction in forces by year's end is premature. To restore law and order we may need to put more soldiers and Marines into Iraq, rather than draw them down.

There also is uncertainty about the long-term plans for the transition from military to civilian authority in Iraq and increasing fear that vacuums of authority will lead to sustained internal conflict in Iraq and greater instability throughout the region. We should not underestimate the ethnic and religious rivalries of a long-repressed people.

These challenges should be met by a unified command structure that clearly articulates objectives and shares transparent plans for political transition. This Committee is hopeful that the recent appointment of Ambassador Bremer as the Civil Administrator of the Department of Defense Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance, is the first step in a carefully coordinated, integrated plan for dealing with Iraq.

In addition, our plans must be clear about the roles of all forces, agencies, and organizations involved in the stabilization and reconstruction process. The specific responsibilities of the Department of Defense, Department of State, and other agencies must be more clearly delineated. We also want to hear about the Administration's plans for generating alliance contributions that will reduce long-term American burdens. Can NATO play a peacekeeping role in Iraq that would allow for the replacement of some U.S. units? The main criteria for the involvement of allies and international organizations beyond the Coalition must be their ability to make contributions that will advance our goals in Iraq.

Secretary Wolfowitz and General Pace, we look forward to your testimony today to give us confidence that comprehensive planning is occurring and that our strategy in Iraq is designed to be a springboard to greater regional stability and a wider peace in the region.

Achieving such ambitious goals will not be easy, quick, or cheap. We are engaged in nation-building in Iraq, because it is in our national interests. This is a complicated and uncertain business that requires both a sense of urgency now and patience over the long run.

###