

Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Chairman Richard Lugar
Opening Statement for Hearing on
IRAQ TRANSITION – CIVIL WAR OR CIVIL SOCIETY
April 21, 2004

Today the Foreign Relations Committee is holding the second in our series of three hearings on Iraq. We will continue to explore whether American and Iraqi authorities are ready for the transition to Iraqi sovereignty on June 30 and what steps are required to fill out a comprehensive transition plan.

Our experiences with inadequate planning and communication related to Iraq contribute to the determination of this Committee to impose a very high standard on the information provided about Iraq. Within the substantial bounds of our oversight capacity we will attempt to illuminate U.S. plans, actions, and options with respect to Iraq – both for the benefit of the American people and to inform our own policymaking role. The Administration must present a detailed plan to prove to Americans, Iraqis, and our allies that we have a strategy and that we are committed to making it work.

At yesterday's hearing, I posed a set of questions to form the basis of our hearings. Clear answers to all of these questions would constitute a coherent transition plan for Iraq.

First, what are the details of Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi's plan for an interim Iraqi Government to which a transfer of sovereignty is planned on June 30, 2004. Specifically, what executive and legislative positions will be established in the interim government and how will these positions be filled? Are we confident that Iraqis will support the United Nations formula for a new government, and what will the U.S. do if Iraqis reject the Brahimi plan?

Second, what status of forces agreement will make clear that the United States and Coalition armed forces will continue to provide internal and external security for the new Iraqi Government, and will that agreement make clear the chain of command and the relationship of Iraqi police, reserves, and army personnel with U.S. and coalition forces?

Third, will United Nations Security Council resolutions undergird the international legitimacy of the new Iraqi government and all of the security arrangements that it will require? Continuing and expanded support of the new Iraqi government by other nations may require additional Security Council resolutions.

Fourth, will elections for the Transitional and Permanent Iraqi governments – scheduled for January 2005 and December 2005, respectively -- be held under the auspices of the United Nations or under some other authority? How will that authority provide security for the elections and assemble a registration list or otherwise determine who is eligible to vote? How will we deal with elections that are postponed or deemed to be fraudulent? Will the National Assembly that is to be elected in

January 2005 have full authority to write a constitution and construct the framework of a permanent government?

Fifth, President Bush has designated Ambassador John Negroponte as his nominee to be the U.S. Ambassador to the new Iraqi government. Our Committee looks forward to addressing this important nomination as expeditiously as possible. Beyond the Ambassador, however, what will be the composition of the U.S. embassy in Baghdad, and what is the schedule for the arrival of all embassy personnel?

Sixth, will the costs associated with the new diplomatic presence be covered by a transfer of funds under the umbrella of the \$87 billion appropriation enacted by the Congress last year? If not, what is the plan for providing the necessary funding?

The Foreign Relations Committee will be persistent in asking these questions and others because Americans should have the opportunity to understand the Bush Administration's plan and carefully monitor its progress.

Our witnesses yesterday underscored the importance of expanding the international role in Iraq to improve the political legitimacy of the Coalition and the interim Iraqi government. There was general consensus that some transfer of sovereignty will occur on June 30th, but that U.S. forces would be required to provide security in Iraq for at least several more years.

They also spoke to the importance of going forward with elections in Iraq, even if security and registration procedures are imperfect. Dr. Juan Cole noted that local elections have been successful in many parts of Iraq and often produced a more moderate result than expected. Dr. Toby Dodge underscored that elections would force Iraqi factions to enunciate policy choices and would stimulate dialogue between potential leaders and the Iraqi populace. In the absence of elections, factions will continue to bid for influence through violence, cronyism, or anti-American demonstrations.

Until elections can be held, however, we must find a means through which the various Iraqi factions can share power peacefully in an interim government. For more than thirty years Saddam Hussein prevented any rival leaders from emerging in Iraq. Religious leaders had little or no political or governing experience and are divided amongst themselves. No secular leader has developed strong support among any major portion of the population. We will continue to examine possible strategies aimed at ensuring that the new interim Iraqi authority is viewed as legitimate by Shi'ites, Kurds, and Sunnis. We must think creatively about how the Coalition and the international community can facilitate the emergence of national leaders in Iraq who are viewed as legitimate and prepared to govern.

We have asked our experts to provide us with their recommendations for U.S. policy leading up to the transition and beyond. Today the Committee is fortunate to have the benefit of a panel with extraordinary expertise on these questions. We welcome General George Joulwan, former Supreme Allied Commander Europe; Dr. Ken Pollack, Director of Research for the Saban Center for Middle East Policy and a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution; Ambassador Michael Sheehan, currently the Deputy Commissioner for Counter-Terrorism of the

New York City Policy Department, and formerly the State Department Coordinator for the Office of Counterterrorism; Dr. Michael O’Hanlon, a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution; and Dr. Ahmed Hashim, Professor of Strategic Studies at the U.S. Naval War College.

We look forward to the insights and recommendations of our witnesses and thank each one for joining us.

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