

U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
Chairman Richard Lugar  
Hearing on Compensation for Victims of International Terrorism  
July 17, 2003

Today the Foreign Relations Committee meets to hear testimony on policy related to compensation for American victims of international terrorism. The Administration has put forward a proposal to establish a comprehensive federal program to provide benefits to terrorism victims. In the interest of stimulating Congressional deliberations, I have introduced that proposal at the Administration's request as S. 1275.

I am pleased to welcome William H. Taft, Legal Adviser to the State Department, who will explain the Administration's proposal and the analysis behind it. I also am pleased to welcome two distinguished lawyers and experts on compensation issues, Stuart Eizenstat and Allan Gerson, who will offer their perspectives on the Administration's proposal.

Members of our Committee have been very interested in developing a workable terrorism compensation policy for U.S. citizens. Senator Allen, in particular, has been active this area, and we welcome his thoughts and those of all members on the subject before us.

This hearing acknowledges an unfortunate reality – many Americans have been the victims of international terrorist attacks during the last quarter century and such attacks are unlikely to end in the near future. Our policies must take account of the needs of those who have been victims of past attacks, while rationally preparing for an uncertain future.

I believe that all Senators are committed to ensuring that the United States has in place the most effective tools possible to combat terrorism and to promote the security of the United States. I also know that Senators are unified in our sympathy for American victims of terrorism and in our desire to see that these victims and their families receive compensation for their losses. The questions we must consider are what laws and policies will most effectively achieve these goals and how do we ensure that policies aimed at compensating victims of terrorism are consistent with broader U.S. national security interests.

In recent years, Congress has addressed issues related to compensation for victims of terrorism through several pieces of legislation. Often such legislation has been attached to larger bills late in the legislative process. This hearing is intended to provide our Committee with an opportunity to examine the issue of terrorism compensation in a deliberative and detailed fashion.

This is an important issue, and one that deserves our careful consideration. We look forward to the testimony of our witnesses to assist us in this task.