

United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
Chairman Richard G. Lugar
Opening Statement for
Business Meeting on the Nomination of John Bolton
April 19, 2005

The Foreign Relations Committee meets today to vote on the nomination of John Bolton to be U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. In this capacity, he would play an important role in securing greater international support for the national security and foreign policy objectives of the United States.

The Foreign Relations Committee has reviewed Secretary Bolton's actions with respect to allegations that he attempted to alter the professional conclusions of intelligence analysts with whom he disagreed and that he subsequently sought to disadvantage the careers of those analysts. Secretary Bolton has denied any impropriety and urged that all information related to these events be made public by the State Department.

In conjunction with this review, the Committee has interviewed witnesses and examined hundreds of documents. We asked the nominee more than 7 hours of questions and he has answered additional questions for the record. By almost any standard, the Foreign Relations Committee has done due diligence on this nominee, particularly given that he has been confirmed twice by the Senate already and that most of us have had personal experiences with him.

John Bolton has served the last four years in an important policymaking job within a competitive and sometimes contentious national security bureaucracy. In that position he will have had thousands of encounters with officials of all ranks and political persuasions. He also will have used intelligence resources virtually every day of his tenure. The charge that he improperly sought to influence intelligence conclusions is a serious one, and it is reasonable to assess his conduct in these encounters. But no one should be surprised to find that episodes of conflict have occurred in this environment over the course of a four-year tenure.

As Chairman, I have to make a judgment about when an investigation of this type moves from being diligent and thorough to being unfair or dilatory. Thus far, the examination of Mr. Bolton's record has been undertaken within the bounds of comity and fairness, and I thank members on both sides of the aisle for that. We have sought the facts surrounding several questionable incidents and we have made those facts available to Committee members and their staffs. But it is now time to make a decision. Senators have a wealth of information on which to base their judgment. My impression is that members of the Committee have made up their minds about the nomination.

The President has made it clear that this is not a casual appointment. He wants a specific person to do a specific job. We should recognize that the UN Ambassador always is closely associated with the President and the Secretary of State. They are responsible for what the Ambassador says and does, and they can dismiss the Ambassador if he does not follow their directives. I do not think the concerns raised about Secretary Bolton warrant our rejection of the President's selection for his own representative to the UN.

We have spent a good deal of time scrutinizing individual conversations and incidents that happened several years ago. Regardless of how each Senator plans to vote today, we should not lose sight of the larger national security issues concerning UN reform and international diplomacy that are central to this nomination.

We should recall that UN reform is an imperative mission of the next ambassador. In 2005, we may have a unique opportunity to improve the operations of the UN. The revelations of the Oil-For-Food scandal and the urgency of strengthening global cooperation to address terrorism, the AIDS crisis, nuclear proliferation, and many other international problems have created momentum in favor of constructive reforms at the UN. Secretary General Kofi Annan has proposed a substantial reform plan that will provide a platform for further reform initiatives and discussions.

The United States must be a leader in the effort to improve the United Nations, particularly its accountability. At a time when the United States is appealing for greater international help in Iraq, in Afghanistan, and in trouble spots around the world, a diminishment of UN credibility because of scandal reduces U.S. options and increases our own burdens.

The President has tapped Secretary Bolton to undertake this urgent mission. Secretary Bolton has affirmed his commitment to fostering a strong United Nations. He has expressed his intent to work hard to secure greater international support at the UN for the national security and foreign policy objectives of the United States. He has stated his belief in decisive American leadership at the UN, and underscored that an effective United Nations is very much in the interest of U.S. national security. I believe that the President deserves to have his nominee represent him at the United Nations.

I thank all Senators for their flexibility and patience during this process.

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