

Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
Senator Richard Lugar
Opening Statement for Nomination Hearing
of John Negroponte to be Deputy Secretary of State
January 30, 2007

It is a pleasure to welcome John Negroponte again to the Committee. As a result of his distinguished career in government, most recently as the nation's first director of national intelligence and his earlier assignments as our ambassador to Iraq and our ambassador to the United Nations, he is well known to many of us. We admire his accomplishments, and we are thankful for the cooperation that he has provided to our Committee in the past.

We know that you share the Committee's view that the State Department has a leadership role to play in addressing the urgent international challenges facing our country. We need a diplomatic corps that can shape complex bilateral relationships, repair and build alliances, and pursue U.S. policy through a labyrinth of foreign languages and cultures. We need ambassadors who can lead our inter-agency teams overseas, negotiate successfully with host governments, and speak authoritatively as the President's personal representatives. We need foreign aid programs run by professionals who know how to encourage democratic practices and boost economic development even in the toughest environments. And we need communications experts who can get our message across to foreign audiences.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the challenges of North Korea and Iran, and the crises in Darfur and Somalia consume both time and energy at the Department and on this Committee. A host of other issues, including international energy security, the spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases, the Arab-Israeli peace process, our developing relationships with emerging giants China and India, and our outreach in our own hemisphere require daily attention.

But as we attend to current policy issues, we must also strengthen the Department itself. The Deputy Secretary has traditionally handled key management problems before they reach the Secretary, refereeing internal squabbles and overseeing the right mix of tools, people, and resources to address whatever crisis is brewing next. Thus, you must be concerned not only with the Department's direction, but also with its capabilities.

This Committee has worked enthusiastically to bolster these capabilities. In 2003 we embarked on an effort to improve the capacity of the Department to deal with stabilization and reconstruction emergencies. Last June, the Senate unanimously passed legislation that Senators Biden, Hagel, and I sponsored to authorize a crisis response fund, the State Department's Reconstruction and Stabilization Office, and a rapid response corps. The President's call in his State of the Union speech for the creation of such a civilian corps is a break-through for this concept. We should work to translate the President's enthusiasm into funding, personnel, and responsibility.

This Committee has been instrumental in efforts to boost the Department's capability in other ways:

- We have worked with our Senate colleagues to foster support for multi-agency contributions to the building of safe embassies.
- We have worked to maintain the Department's primacy in determining which countries will receive U.S. foreign assistance and how much they will receive.
- We are working to back-up the authority of ambassadors as they oversee the U.S. campaign against terrorism.
- We continue to argue for a foreign policy budget that reflects the pivotal roles of the State Department, USAID, and the MCC.

All these efforts are works in progress and we need you as a partner in pursuing them.

One other area where I hope you can make improvements is in the timely filling of key policy positions. The position for which you have been nominated has been vacant since July 7, 2006. The Department is without a Counter-terrorism Coordinator. The Under Secretary for Economic Affairs, whose portfolio includes critical international energy issues, is soon to depart for the World Food Program. The Stabilization and Reconstruction office went without a permanent coordinator for some eight months before John Herbst arrived. The Political-Military Bureau is losing its leader, and there are a number of other top posts that are being vacated. We should be seeking the best people to fill posts as attrition occurs. We are a nation at war in two countries and every gap in civilian leadership is felt.

With a Foreign Service career that has spanned decades, you have unique understanding of the Department's shortcomings as well as the vital contributions its employees make to building a peaceful and prosperous world. I am grateful that you are undertaking this task, and I look forward to working with you.

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