

Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, November 8, 2005

I AM DEEPLY HONORED to be here, before your Committee once again, and to appear before so many friends and associates.

Allow me to begin with a brief reminiscence. Ten years ago today, I was at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, in the eighth day of the twenty-one day negotiation that brought the war in Bosnia to an end. The route to get there had been tortuous, and the end came only after almost 300,000 people had died, and over 2,500,000 people had been made homeless, by the worst war in Europe in fifty years. Decisive American intervention had been slow, and two Administrations had failed to take sufficient action to stop the conflict, leaving the primary responsibility in the hands of the European Union and the United Nations, which had utterly failed this first significant post Cold War test. During that long, bleak period, members of this Committee, including its current chairman, Senator Lugar, and its ranking minority member, Senator Biden, had pressed the case for American action, I remember especially coming before this Committee for confirmation as Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs in 1994. Prior to that hearing, I met privately with Senator Biden in a room off the Senate floor, and he delivered one of those warnings that most of you in this room are quite familiar with. While the Senate rules of decorum prevent me from repeating verbatim what Senator Biden said that day, I can tell you that he was scathing in his denunciation of American inaction and lack of leadership; precise in his description of the situation on the ground; visionary in his prescription of what had to be done to stop

the war; and very explicit in his references to which part of my anatomy would be lost if I did not do something about it.

Dayton ended that war, and among the many lessons of that negotiation is the one that Joe Biden was so forceful in putting forward, as he has done again in Iraq: the absolute necessity of strong American leadership. I would also add one lesson from Bosnia and Kosovo that was not applied in Iraq, with tragic consequences: we took to Dayton a two-hundred page peace plan, with detailed documentation covering every aspect of the post-war period from giving authority to the military to shoot first and ask questions later, to eleven detailed annexes on political and economic issues. Dayton was not perfect – far from it – but it ended the war – and contrary to almost every prediction – there were no American or NATO casualties. I repeat: in the ten years since Dayton, not one American or NATO soldier has been killed or wounded from hostile action. Today, out of the 20,000 soldiers we sent to Bosnia in 1996, only about 150 remain, an essential symbolic reminder that we will remain engaged.

So I want to thank my friend Joe Biden, and his colleagues, for their support and encouragement that day and beyond. I hope you feel that, however imperfectly and belatedly, we achieved the lofty goals you set out for us, and that Senator Biden did not, therefore, have to relieve me of any body parts.

On another personal note: ten years ago today, as I was at Dayton, my friend and colleague Nick Burns, then the Secretary of State's spokesman, was flying back to

Dayton with his boss, Warren Christopher, for one of four trips he would make to our negotiating site. Nick, whom I consider one of the outstanding diplomats of the current generation, was not only a frequent visitor to Dayton – he was also the only person, in Dayton or Washington, authorized by all the parties to speak on the record about what was going on. This experience ten years ago has been critically important, I believe, in preparing him for the important assignment that Secretary Rice gave him when he became Undersecretary of State, to oversee American policy towards the Balkans.

I am very pleased, therefore, that Nick Burns has, at Secretary Rice's direction, re-engaged American policy in the Balkans after four years of drift and neglect that was at times hardly benign. Under their guidance, a plan to mark the tenth anniversary of Dayton, November 21, with a series of improvements on the original agreements. These improvements are long overdue, such as police and military reform, movement toward a single presidency, reconciliation commission – are finally underway. They have my full support.

In Kosovo, Ambassador Burns has undertaken an even more daunting task. For if the war in Bosnia is over and will not resume, this cannot be said of Kosovo. War could break out there at any time. Tensions between the two main ethnic groups are as high as ever. The loss of four vital years pursuing a failed U.S.-EU-UN theory called “standards before status” – which was really a way of avoiding action – is irretrievable. During that time ethnic tensions rose, opportunities were missed, and events have removed or weakened two of the leading political figures in the region – the late Serbian Prime

Minister Zoran Djindjic, who was assassinated, and Kosovo President Ibrahim Rugova, who is now ill with a serious disease.

Now, standards before status has finally been removed as an obstacle to progress in implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1244 of 1999, which called for final status talks. The delay was, as I have said, costly, but now it is time to get on with it.

Where do we go from here? I am pleased that UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has appointed Marti Atissari, former president of Finland, as his negotiator to resolve the final status of Kosovo. I look forward to the appointment in the near future of an American of comparable rank to ensure that progress is made.

This will be a difficult task, but it is essential to start. The end result is one that official negotiators cannot, of course, proclaim in advance; no good negotiator would do so. But outside observers, especially when appearing before the United States Congress, have an obligation to speak the truth as they see it. In that spirit, let me be clear that I cannot see any final status for Kosovo other than independence, but at the same time – and this must be stressed equally – this cannot be achieved without ironclad guarantees for the safety, security, and protection of the rights of the Serbs who live in Kosovo. When I have said this in the past, each side has, characteristically, quoted only half of my statement. So let me repeat; Kosovo's destiny is as an independent state, but it will not get there unless its Serb minority can live in peace with the Kosovar Albanian majority. For the long-oppressed Albanian majority, this will finally rectify the events of 1911, and

this is an historic necessity. But independence cannot come simply to replace one form of oppression with another. Will independence for Kosovo be accompanied by another bloodbath, this time of Serbs? We cannot let this happen.

When I said things along these lines in Pristina two years ago, and repeated them in an article in The Wall Street Journal, I was roundly attacked by the Serbs. And the Albanians ignored the parts of my comments concerning minority rights. This is to be expected in any situation as fraught with history and hatred at Kosovo; think of Kashmir, the Middle East, Aceh, Sri Lanka, and so on. But there really is no other choice if we are ever to get to the end of this expensive process without further bloodshed.

Whatever happens, a residual international security force will be necessary in Kosovo. I believe that this is an appropriate function for NATO, and that any international contingent must include American troops. That is the lesson of Bosnia and Kosovo over the last ten years. I know that there are those in the U.S. government who have questioned this, especially with the overwhelming troop requirements in Iraq and Afghanistan. But precisely because we must show the world that we do not abandon our commitments, we must finish the job. And, if we don't, the subsequent costs will be even higher, and what was done so far will have been wasted.

One additional point: the European Union. The long range goal should be the full integration into a unified Europe of the entire Balkans, including Serbia, Bosnia, Albania, Montenegro (as, I believe, a separate country, but that is their decision to make),

Macedonia, and Croatia. Nothing would do more for expanding the zone of freedom and democracy eastward, an historic necessity of the highest order. Vast economic benefits can flow to the region from such events. But to get there will take time, as it will also with Turkey. And the EU should not – I repeat, not – give away moves towards membership for too low a price, as they have sometimes done in the recent past. The standards of the EU should not only be maintained, they should be used as leverage and incentive for the reforms needed in every one of these countries on such critical issues as war criminals (especially, of course, Karadzic, Mladic, and Gotovina), a single presidency, respect for individual and group rights, press freedom, viable and transparent governments, and so on.

I hope that the Congress, led as always by his committee, will take the lead in supporting American engagement in the process, and that it will indicate its support for a process that gives true self determination and security to all the people of Kosovo. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to appear before you today.