
Opening Statement for Hearing on Military Role in Foreign Policy

By

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[The following are excerpts from a transcript of U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Republican Leader Dick Lugar's opening statement at the committee hearing on defining the military's role in foreign policy, July 31, 2008.]

During the last five years, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has focused much attention on how we can improve our diplomatic and foreign assistance capabilities and integrate them more effectively with the military component of national power. Since 2003, we have been advocating through hearings and legislation the establishment of a civilian counterpart to the military in post-conflict situations. We have argued for a rapidly deployable civilian corps that is trained to work with the military on stabilization and reconstruction missions in hostile environments. This is the intent of the Lugar-Biden-Hagel legislation that passed the Senate in 2006 and passed this Committee again this year. Increasing the capacity of civilian agencies and integrating them with our military power is essential if we are to be ready for the next post-conflict mission.

The Pentagon's role in foreign assistance also has been of longstanding interest to the Committee. In 2006, I directed the Republican staff of the Committee to investigate the expanding role of the U.S. military in areas that traditionally have been in the portfolio of the State Department. The resulting report, "Embassies as Command Posts in the Campaign Against Terror," was led by former Senior Professional Staff Member Mary Locke, who will be testifying on the second panel. The report documented the rise in development and humanitarian assistance that is being funded and managed by the Pentagon. The report recommended that all security assistance, including Section 1206, be included under the Secretary of State's authority in a coordination process for rationalizing and prioritizing foreign assistance.

The role of the Defense Department in stabilization and reconstruction, foreign assistance, and public information programs has grown in the post September 11 environment. This new role includes increased funding, new authorities, and new platforms such as AFRICOM [Africa Command]. It also has produced new models for inter-agency coordination as reflected in SOUTHCOM [Southern Command] and the approval process for Section 1206 projects.

It is clear that our military and civilian capabilities are severely out of balance. In 2001, Defense spending comprised just 5.2 percent of total U.S. official development assistance. According to preliminary figures, this has increased to 15 percent in 2007. While Congress maintains generous levels of funding to our military, funding for our diplomacy and foreign assistance persistently falls short. Defense Secretary Gates points out that the total foreign affairs budget request for FY2009 is roughly equivalent to what the Pentagon spends on health care alone. The one-year increase in personnel planned by the Army is about the same size as the entire Foreign Service.

Secretary Gates has been vocal in supporting a reinvigoration of civilian agency capabilities. Until that happens, he has also made clear that the military must continue to engage in many non-combat activities, such as reviving public services, rebuilding infrastructure, and promoting good governance. This position reflects new thinking within the Defense Department on the use of the U.S. military in preventive, deterrent, and preemptive activities as reflected in Quadrennial Defense Reviews.

Many experts consider the military ill-suited to running foreign assistance and public information programs. These functions properly belong with civilian foreign policy agencies. Nevertheless, Congress has granted new authorities to DoD to fill the gaps in civilian capacity. These grants of authority have been given on a temporary basis, and Congress has resisted making them permanent or expanding their reach. However, the Pentagon has continued to request that these authorities be made permanent and be expanded in both size and scope.

As this debate continues, we must address several fundamental questions. In the long term, should DoD be involved in global programs of a purely civilian nature? What are the consequences of U.S. engagement being fronted by a military uniform? In regions of the world with an uneven history of civilian control of the military, do we risk professionalizing foreign militaries to the extent that they overshadow the capacities of civilian governments? If current State Department programs providing military assistance are cumbersome and slow, should we first address those problems rather than create competing programs in other agencies?

Answers to such questions are essential to ensure that we are not engaging in mission creep that has not been well thought out by all the relevant policy actors. The best approach would be to develop a truly integrated national security strategy that assigns roles and resources according to the strengths of each foreign policy agency. Although developing such a comprehensive approach is beyond our scope today, I am hopeful that Congress, the State Department, and the Defense Department will give greater attention to constructing a system of roles and authorities that maximize the prospects for success of U.S. national security policy.