
Legislation and Policy

President's Fiscal Year 2009 International Affairs Budget Request

By
Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

[The following is a verbatim transcript of the Secretary's statement before the Senate Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, Export Financing and Related Programs, April 9, 2008.]

Secretary Rice: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Let me thank the members of this Committee for the work that we have done together over the last several years. I think that despite sometimes differences on policy or on tactics, we have always tried to work in the interests of the United States of America. And I think that we have agreed that that has meant that America needed to represent not just power but also principle. We've worked together to put together an agenda, a compassion agenda that we see in evidence in places like Africa, with the President's Emergency Program For AIDS Relief, for the malaria program that we have. We have been able to quadruple development assistance to Africa, to triple it worldwide, and to double it for Latin America.

Without this committee, we would not be—not have been able to meet the challenges that we have had in having our diplomats and our civilians in some of the most dangerous places in the world. And I don't just mean Iraq and Afghanistan, although those are clearly very dangerous, but also in many unaccompanied posts around the world where our people go without family and work in harm's way and work in difficult conditions in some of the most remote parts of the world to try and help people build a better life. And without your help, we would not have been able to engage in what we call transformational diplomacy, trying to increase the number of well-governed democratic states that can provide for their people and act as responsible citizens in the international community.

With your forbearance, members of the Committee, I would just like to say one word about our people in Iraq in particular right now. It's a difficult time for our Embassy. We've had a number of incidents. It's been more difficult recently. And I just want to say that we keep them in our thoughts and we appreciate their service, and I know that you do too. Very often, we talk about the honorable service of our men and women in uniform; and it is to be honored. We also have a lot of civilians on the front lines who take risks daily. And so I'd just like to acknowledge their service.

I believe that the President's budget request this year for State Operations and for Foreign Operations will permit us to continue to pursue our efforts at securing our people, building reasonable facilities for them, increasing our efforts at public diplomacy and exchanges, something that we all agreed we should do at the beginning of my tenure and I think we have done precisely that. There is really no better commercial, if you will, for American democracy and the strength of America than having our people travel abroad and having people travel here. And we've tried, through public-private partnerships, more exchanges, more visitors, to give people access to the United States.

We are also requesting in this budget 1,100 new positions for the State Department and 300 new ones for USAID [U.S. Agency for International Development]. This represents a rebuilding, if you will, of our

civilian capacity to manage programs, to engage in diplomacy. I felt that it was important that we first do some important reallocation and redeployment of our people to demonstrate that we were prepared to make tough choices. And by moving close to 300 people out of Europe and into places like India and the further reaches of China, I think we've demonstrated that we are prepared to do what we can with the resources that we have. But the truth is that the diplomatic corps is stretched; USAID is even more stretched. We went through a period in the '90s of almost six years where we didn't hire, didn't bring in a single Foreign Service Officer. And so we do need to rebuild.

And it speaks, Senator Leahy, to the point that you've made about the role of the State Department and what I'll call reconstruction and development, or, if you wish, nation-building, which is that the Department does want to be at the forefront of those efforts. We need an institutional base from which to do that; and that is why we've requested funding for what the President announced in his State of the Union last year, which is the civilian reserve, a Civilian Response Corps, which we believe would be a very important way for civilians to lead the efforts at stabilization and reconstruction.

Finally, let me say that we have, I think, used our foreign assistance well to support efforts at Middle East peace, at consolidation of democratic forces in Latin America. In places like Pakistan where it is very difficult, we have, nonetheless, seen Pakistan now move from military rule to civilian rule, to have democratic elections for the first time in more than a decade. These are processes that I think we've been able to support with the assistance and with the efforts of our diplomats.

If I may just on two other points that were raised on—particularly in Latin America, just to underscore what Senator Gregg has said about the importance of the free trade agreement for Colombia, this is a country that was very near being a failed state at the beginning of this decade. It was a country where bombings in the capital were routine, where the government was unable to control almost 30 percent of its territory, either because of the FARC [Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)] or because of paramilitaries. It is a country that now has a foreign minister who was held six years in captivity by the FARC. And so it is a country that has come a long way back under President Uribe and his program for democratic security. He is, as a result, a very popular leader in Colombia. But I think that is because he has brought his people security and he is devoted to human rights and to furthering the democratic enterprise. I know there are a lot of concerns. But I will just say I was in Medellin very recently with a congressional delegation. And Medellin, which used to be synonymous with Pablo Escobar and trouble, is now a thriving city in which the Colombian citizens believe they can be secure.

Finally, let me just in response to something that Senator Gregg said, I really do hope that we can remove these restrictions on the ANC [African National Congress]. This is a country with which we now have excellent relations—South Africa. But it's, frankly, a rather embarrassing matter that I still have to waive in my own counterpart, the Foreign Minister of South Africa, not to mention the great leader Nelson Mandela.

So we have a lot of work to do. I continue to hope that during the remainder of our tenure that we will be able to make progress in providing for our people compensation reform, security facilities, and new positions. And I hope that we'll be able to make some progress on the great foreign policy issues of our day. But I have been enormously proud to serve as America's Secretary of State because George Shultz once told me that it's the best job in government. And I said, "George, why is that?" And he said, "Because there is no greater honor than representing the United States of America as its chief diplomat." And I have found that, and I want to thank you for helping me play that role. Thank you very much.