

Testimony of

The Honorable Barbara Boxer

June 25, 2003

Opening Statement of Senator Barbara Boxer

Joint Hearing of the Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs and Judiciary

Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Property Rights

Hearing on Constitutionalism, Human Rights and the Rule of Law in the Nation of Iraq

June 25, 2003

Chairman Chafee, Chairman Cornyn, thank you for holding this hearing today on Constitutionalism, Human Rights and the Rule of Law in the Nation of Iraq.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee has held several hearings on Iraq since last July, beginning under the leadership of Chairman Biden and then under Chairman Lugar. In February, prior to U.S. military action against Iraq, the Committee held a hearing on post-Saddam Iraq. Representatives of both the State Department and Department of Defense testified.

The Committee asked several questions:

- ? Who will rule Iraq?
- ? Who will provide security?
- ? How long will U.S. troops have to stay?
- ? What will be the role of the U.N.?
- ? What allies will share the burden of reconstructing Iraq?

During this hearing, the Committee failed to get clear answers - only rosy scenarios. As Chairman Lugar recently said, "We were unable in this committee to find very much from the administration about what they were going to do." The administration - in the Chairman's own words - was not "well prepared."

In my view, the number one priority in Iraq is to provide basic law and order. It is unfortunate that we were not better prepared to stop the looting and lawlessness that took place after the fall of Baghdad.

Now, our military men and women, who so ably fought to rid Iraq of Saddam Hussein, are frustrated that they have not been given the tools or training to act as peacekeepers.

According to the Washington Post, "soldiers complain that they have been insufficiently equipped for peacekeeping and too thinly deployed in areas where they are under attack from fighters evidently loyal to deposed president Saddam Hussein."

Because of the Bush administration's insistence on a unilateral policy toward Iraq, the task of keeping peace falls almost exclusively to the United States. Right now, the U.S. has 146,000 troops in Iraq - non U.S. coalition forces number 12,000. U.S. forces make up 92 percent of the total. To compare, after hostilities ended in Bosnia, the security force was about one-third American; in Kosovo, about one-fifth. It is imperative that we do more to involve other nations in maintaining law and order in Iraq.

A second issue we face is how to establish a viable transitional government of Iraq. It is clear that the administration's initial plans have failed. General Garner has been recalled and replaced by a civilian administrator. The Pentagon's plan to give power to Mr. Chalabi and the Iraqi National Congress has apparently been scrapped.

Unlike Afghanistan where a Loya Jirga allowed Hamid Karzai to take control relatively soon after the fall of the Taliban, no such mechanism to produce a viable Iraqi leader has emerged.

Finally, I want to highlight the need to ensure that our initial missteps in Iraq do not lead to a rise in religious fundamentalism. In yesterday's New York Times, Nicolas Kristof writes that, "An iron curtain of fundamentalism risks falling over Iraq, with particularly grievous implications for girls and women. President Bush hopes that Iraq will turn into a shining model of democracy, and that could still happen. But for now it's the Shiite fundamentalists who are gaining ground."

Concerns about women and girls led me to offer an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Authorization bill to make it U.S. policy to ensure the full and active participation of women in the reconstruction of Iraq by promoting the involvement of women in the Iraqi government, the planning and distribution of assistance, and job promotion and training programs. I am pleased this amendment was unanimously adopted by the Foreign Relations Committee.

In addition, a report is being released today by Women Waging Peace in conjunction with the Woodrow Wilson Center on the role of women in post-conflict Iraq. The findings contained in this report are the result of a two-day conference involving 26 Iraqi women leaders. Zainab Salbi, who will testify as part of our first panel of witnesses this afternoon, played a key role in the development of this report.

We must ensure the full and active participation of women in the rebuilding of Iraq. It is necessary for long-term stability and the success of a democratic transition.

Thank you.