

Testimony of

The Honorable Alberto Gonzales

January 6, 2005

STATEMENT OF
ALBERTO R. GONZALES
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
UNITED STATES SENATE
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Mr. Chairman, Senator Leahy, Distinguished Members of the Committee. It is the highest honor of my professional career to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be Attorney General of the United States. I owe a debt of deep gratitude to the President for the trust he has placed in me.

I also want to thank Senator Cornyn, for his kind introduction, and for his many years of friendship. Ken Salazar was sworn in as a United States Senator just two days ago. Thank you Senator for your willingness to extend your hand of friendship across the political aisle to introduce me today. Although Senator Hutchison could not be with us today, I appreciate her many years of support as well.

My family is critical to any measure of success I have had, and if I may, I'd like to introduce them to you now. My wife Rebecca - thank you, Becky, for your unfailing support. I am immensely proud of our sons, they are here today: Jared, Graham, and Gabriel.

I would be remiss if I failed to acknowledge the support and sacrifices of my parents - my late father Pablo, and my mother, Maria. My mother is here this morning, as is my brother Tony - a 20-year veteran of the Houston Police Department. A person could not even begin the journey from Humble, Texas to the White House to this hearing without the foundation of a fine family, and I want to acknowledge their love and support.

Mr. Chairman, the highest objective of the Department of Justice is the pursuit of justice. This noble objective - justice - is reflected in human terms in the hopeful eyes of a new citizen, voting for the first time; in the quiet gratitude of a victim of crime whose rights have been vindicated in the courts; and in the pride of a person given the opportunity to succeed, no matter the skin color, or gender, or disability. For Justice, properly understood, cannot in my view be divorced from the individual. It always has a human dimension and if confirmed as Attorney General, I pledge that I will always remember that.

If confirmed as Attorney General, I will no longer represent only the White House; I will represent the United States of America and its people. I understand the differences between the two roles. In the former, I have been privileged to advise the President and his staff. In the latter, I would have a far broader responsibility: to pursue justice for all the people of our great nation; to see that the laws are enforced in a fair and impartial manner for all Americans.

Wherever we pursue justice - from the war on terror to corporate fraud to civil rights - we must always be faithful to the rule of law. I want to make very clear that I am deeply committed to the rule of law. I have a deep and abiding commitment to the fundamental American principle that we are a nation of laws, and not of men. That commitment is the core principle that has guided all of my professional endeavors.

Our Government's most basic obligation is to protect its citizens from enemies who would destroy their lives and our nation's way of life. The Department of Justice's top priority is to prevent terror attacks against our nation. As we fight the War on Terror, we must always honor and observe the principles that make our society so unique and worthy of protection. We must be committed to preserving civil rights and civil liberties. I look forward if I am confirmed to working with this Committee, the Congress, and the public to ensure that we are doing all we can to do so. Although we may have differences from time to time, we all love our country and want to protect it while remaining true to our nation's highest ideals. Working together, we can accomplish that goal.

After the attacks of 9/11, our government had fundamental decisions to make concerning how to apply treaties and U.S. law to an enemy that does not wear a uniform, owes no allegiance to any country, is not a party to any treaties, and - most importantly - does not fight according to the laws of war.

As we have debated these questions, the President has made clear that he is prepared to protect and defend the United States and its citizens, and will do so vigorously, but always in a manner consistent with our nation's values and applicable law, including our treaty obligations. I pledge that, if I am confirmed as Attorney General, I will abide by those commitments.

Chairman Specter, if I may add a personal note, I want to congratulate you for your Chairmanship of this important committee, and I look forward if confirmed to the many occasions we will discuss the important issues facing our country in the months and years ahead. Senator Hatch, I want to thank you for your dedicated service as Chairman of this Committee, for the good working relationship we have enjoyed, and for all the many kindnesses you have shown me personally. I appreciate the good working relationship I've enjoyed with Senator Leahy during my tenure as Counsel to the President. I know him to be a person of good will and dedication and I have great confidence that, if I'm fortunate enough to be confirmed, we will build on that as we reach across the aisle to work together to serve the American people.

Mr. Chairman, it is a distinct honor to appear before the Committee today. I appreciate the time and attention that members of the Committee and their staffs have dedicated to this hearing and to consideration of my nomination. And I look forward to answering your questions not just at this hearing, but if I am fortunate enough to be confirmed, in the months and years ahead as we work together in the noble and high calling of the pursuit of justice.