

Opening Statement
Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Confirmation Hearing for John Bolton
July 27, 2006

Mr. Chairman, thank you for convening this hearing. It presents a rare opportunity to review a nominee's suitability for the position – because in this case the nominee has been on the job for nearly a year.

Last year, we were told that Mr. Bolton was an unvarnished straight-talker, who was just the man to achieve UN reform. There is no question that he remains a straight-talker; the question is whether that straight-talk has advanced U.S. objectives at the UN.

There has been progress at the U.N. this past year, but it seems to have been largely in spite of Mr. Bolton, not because of him. Indeed, there are numerous reports – from the media, from non-governmental organizations and from Mr. Bolton's colleagues in New York that Mr. Bolton's approach to the job has set back our efforts to reform the United Nations and further alienated other countries from us – including good friends – at the very time we need them with us to meet incredibly difficult challenges in the Middle East and Asia. Instead of isolating the bad guys, Mr. Bolton's approach allows the bad guys to isolate the United States.

Listen to the words of a diplomat from a close U.S. ally, who for obvious reasons chose to remain anonymous. He recently told the *New York Times*: “My initial feeling was, let's see if we can work with him, and I have done some things to push for consensus on issues that were not easy for my country. But all he gives us in return is, ‘It doesn't matter, whatever you do is insufficient.’ He's lost me as an ally now, and that's what many other ambassadors who consider themselves friends of the U.S. are saying.” This view of Mr. Bolton seems to be the rule, not the exception: the same *New York Times* piece indicated that some 30 ambassadors interviewed were critical of Mr. Bolton's modus operandi.

Maybe these accounts are not true. Today, Mr. Bolton has an opportunity to tell his side of the story – and the Committee has a chance to fully evaluate his performance.

Mr. Chairman, I hope this hearing is illuminating, but I also hope it is not a waste of time. Let me remind the Committee that Mr. Bolton was denied a confirmation vote because the Administration denied the Senate critical information to which it was entitled. The Administration has still not provided that information, and unless and until it does, Mr. Bolton should not receive a vote in the full Senate.

The withheld information includes transcripts of ten intercepts by the National Security Agency, which Mr. Bolton requested in order to learn the identity of American citizens referenced in those intercepts. Mr. Bolton and his staff saw this information; the administration refused to share it with the Senate. Since last summer, it has been

revealed that the NSA has engaged in warrantless surveillance of American citizens – which makes the intercepts shown to Mr. Bolton all the more relevant.

The administration also withheld documents relating to Congressional testimony prepared for Mr. Bolton on Syria's weapons of mass destruction programs in the summer of 2003. We know from interviews with senior intelligence officials that Mr. Bolton sought to stretch the intelligence on those programs, at a time when military action against Syria was being openly debated in Washington following the invasion of Iraq. The information that was denied to the Committee may also shed light on whether Mr. Bolton misled the Committee when he indicated that he had not seen the draft testimony.

The Senate has a right to this information in exercising its constitutional duty. I urge the Administration to change its mind about providing it. But I hold out little hope that it will do so, because it has obviously decided that it would rather have a confrontation with the Democrats over this nomination.

With all the major foreign policy challenges facing the United States, is it too much to hope that the Administration might abandon its partisan approach to national security issues? Is it too much to ask the President to submit a nominee who can receive the unanimous support of this Committee and the Senate?

I challenge the President: reject the advice of your campaign strategists. Send us a nominee well-respected on both sides – a nominee like Jack Danforth, who sailed through this body in ten days with unanimous support, who will stand up for America at the U.N. and who will get results. We will confirm him or her with equal speed. But pull down this nomination, which promises to divide us at time when, more than ever, you will need unity in the Congress.