



News from Congresswoman

Nita M. Lowey

Chairwoman, State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee

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State and Foreign Operations Subcommittee Evaluates Supplemental Spending Request

(WASHINGTON) – *Congresswoman Nita Lowey, Chairwoman of the Appropriations State and Foreign Operations Subcommittee, today delivered the following opening statement at a hearing convened to evaluate the remainder of the Administration's \$7 billion request for emergency appropriations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere:*

I would like to welcome Deputy Secretary Negroponte to today's hearing on the President's Fiscal Year 2008 request for Emergency Supplemental Appropriations.

I regret that members have not had the opportunity to review testimony and prepare for today's hearing. The committee requires all testimony 48 hours in advance so that Members and staff are able to review and prepare their questions. In the case of today's hearing, testimony was not provided to the committee until late yesterday afternoon. I don't know if this is a case of the Department not having enough staff to write the testimony or too much bureaucracy that has to clear it. As we look at reforming the State Department, this is one obvious area that needs work.

Mr. Secretary, the Administration has requested nearly \$7 billion in emergency appropriations for Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan, Pakistan, North Korea, Mexico, and the Palestinian Authority. Most of this request came late last fall when there was insufficient time to fully examine the Administration's proposal.

As you know, Congress provided \$1.4 billion in emergency funding in the FY2008 omnibus appropriations bill for the most critical and time-sensitive items. We deferred consideration of the remainder of the request until the spring of 2008 in order to more fully examine the details.

Let me begin with Iraq. The Administration has requested nearly \$3 billion for assistance and operations in Iraq from this subcommittee. However, I continue to have concerns about the absence of a consistent and coherent diplomatic and reconstruction strategy, the inability to program funds in an accountable and effective manner, and the lack of Iraqi political will to commit its own resources to reconstruction. I would also like to hear about your plans to transition more of the responsibility for reconstruction from the military to USAID and the State Department.

Much has been said by the Administration and my GOP colleagues about the success of the surge. While I would agree that the addition of more American soldiers has brought down the level of violence, the measure of success is not this temporary reduction in violence. The true measure of success is broad and sustainable political reconciliation in Iraq. The true measure of success is a reduced reliance on U.S. troops and a greater reliance on Iraqi security forces. The true measure of success is a transition from a U.S.-military-led stabilization effort to an Iraqi-led effort. In my opinion, none of this is happening to the extent necessary.

With respect to the security situation, while general violence seems to have decreased, my understanding is that a more disturbing pattern has emerged of targeted attacks of doctors, engineers and other technocrats -- the very people needed to run the country.

Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus are expected in Washington within a month to present another update on the surge. We also look forward to Ambassador Crocker coming before this Subcommittee to make the case for the budget request.

In Afghanistan, we continue to struggle against an insurgency fueled by terrorist safe havens in Pakistan and funded by bumper crops of opium. Chances for consolidating success earlier were lost as the Administration diverted its attention to a war of choice in Iraq. Now, the Taliban and Al Qaeda are growing stronger, the Karzai government is struggling to meet the expectations of the Afghan people, and the international community is losing interest. But, we cannot afford to fail in Afghanistan. While the Administration has requested over \$800 million in emergency funding for Afghanistan, the vast majority -- over \$500 million -- is to build roads and provide power. I fail to understand why so much of the infrastructure burden is being borne by the United States. Why are the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank not doing more in this area? Why are other bilateral donors, including the Saudis and the Japanese not committing more to infrastructure development?

Additionally, the President also requested the first tranche of a three year, \$1.4 billion request for the Merida Counternarcotics Initiative, including \$550 million in the FY08 supplemental. The rise of narco-trafficking and related violence in our southern neighbor is very troubling. One direct consequence of Plan Colombia has been the relocation of drug cartels from Colombia to Mexico. This pattern of the problem simply shifting from one area to another isn't new and it continues the flow of drugs into our communities. Our counternarcotics strategy has failed to stem this balloon effect.

The Administration's proposal again focuses a great deal on military hardware, yet there is no reason Mexico cannot continue to procure its own helicopters. The fundamental problem in Mexico isn't too few guns or helicopters; it is a lack of capacity and political will in the law enforcement institutions, coupled with rampant corruption. I would like to see a greater focus on addressing corruption in the Mexican police and justice system as well as safeguarding human rights.

With respect to your request for the Palestinian Authority, I am gravely concerned with the current situation on the ground. I understand that President Abbas has allegedly made several statements about possible renewed armed struggle with Israel and bragged about Fatah's teaching resistance tactics to Hezbollah. Obviously, these remarks are deeply concerning as was President Abbas' initial announcement to suspend peace talks with Israel. I understand that Secretary Rice is working to bring President Abbas back to the negotiating table and he has indicated that he will resume peace talks in the future. I hope you can provide this Committee with a status update and the steps you are taking to determine Abu Mazen's true intentions.

This is particularly important in light of the congressional notifications USAID sent on Friday on cash transfer assistance for the Palestinian Authority. I have put a hold on these notifications. Clearly, Abu Mazen's comments cast doubt on his commitment to the peace process. Furthermore several requests of mine have not been fulfilled and I am working with the Department and USAID to receive both the certification on the ESF conditions and information on the agreement between the U.S. and Palestinians governing this assistance.

There are many other issues addressed in this supplemental request--from assistance for the tribal regions of Pakistan, to aid to North Korea, to elections and peacekeeping in Sudan. In my remaining time, I want to note my deep concern about the limited deployment of UNAMID in Darfur and the Khartoum government's continued obstruction of this peacekeeping force. I would like to hear what steps you are taking to ensure the robust deployment of this force. I am also very concerned with the shortfall of

humanitarian assistance in both the supplemental request and the fiscal year 2009 bill—especially in light of the ever-rising number of Iraqi refugees and internally-displaced persons. I hope you can address these issues as well.

Before I turn to the Ranking Member, Mr. Wolf for his comments, let me just note my frustration and disappointment in the way that this Administration continues to treat one of our closest allies in the Middle East – Jordan. I know that the Jordanians have been asking for the past several years for a multi-year economic and security package to help them deal with the economic and security burden they are bearing due to the war in Iraq and the growing threats they are facing along their borders. I am also aware that the King renewed this request during a meeting with the President earlier this week. I hope you can elaborate on the U.S.-Jordan relationship and how you intend to proceed with this request.

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