

U.S. DEPARTMENT *of* STATE

KEYWORD SEARCH

[Subject Index](#)

+ BOOKMARK ...

[Home](#)[Issues & Press](#)[Travel & Business](#)[Countries](#)[Youth & Education](#)[Careers](#)[About State](#)

You are in: [Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice](#) > [What the Secretary Has Been Saying](#) > [2007 Secretary Rice's Remarks](#) > [December 2007: Secretary Rice's Remarks](#)

## A Civilian Partner for Our Troops

### Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Op-Ed with Senator Richard G. Lugar

The Washington Post

December 17, 2007

It is unusual in Washington when an idea is overwhelmingly supported by the president, a bipartisan majority of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the State Department, and both the civilian and military leadership of the Pentagon. But that is the case with the proposed Civilian Reserve Corps, a volunteer cadre of civilian experts who can work with our military to perform the urgent jobs of post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction.

Creating such an institution is essential for our national security, and the Senate should authorize the creation of the corps. Over the past decade and a half, the United States has learned that some of the greatest threats to our national security emerge not only from the armies and arsenals of hostile nations but also from the brittle institutions and failing economies of weak and poorly governed states.

We have learned that one of the central tasks of U.S. foreign policy for the foreseeable future will be to support responsible leaders and citizens in the developing world who are working to build effective, peaceful states and free, prosperous societies.

Responding to these challenges is a job for civilians -- those who have the expertise and the experience in the rule of law, governance, agriculture, police training, economics and finance, and other critical areas. The State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development are working heroically to meet this need.

But the truth is, no diplomatic service in the world has within its ranks all the experts or expertise needed for this kind of work. As a result, from Somalia and Haiti to Bosnia and Kosovo, and now to Afghanistan and Iraq, our government has increasingly depended on our men and women in uniform to perform civilian responsibilities.

The military has filled this void admirably, but it is a task that others can and should take up. The primary responsibility for post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction should not fall to our fighting men and women but to volunteer,

civilian experts.

That is why President Bush called for the establishment of a volunteer Civilian Reserve Corps in his 2007 State of the Union address. "Such a corps would function much like our military reserve," he said. "It would ease the burden of the armed forces by allowing us to hire civilians with critical skills to serve on missions abroad when America needs them." Both the State Department and the Pentagon support this initiative.

The Senate has likewise recognized the need for a stand-alone rebuilding capacity and last year unanimously passed legislation to create a Reconstruction and Stabilization corps within the State Department. Legislation before the Senate would take further steps to establish the operational elements necessary for this work. The bill has three parts:

First, it calls for a 250-person active-duty corps of Foreign Service professionals from State and USAID, trained with the military and ready to deploy to conflict zones.

Second, it would establish a roster of 2,000 other federal volunteers with language and technical skills to stand by as a ready reserve.

Third, it would create the Civilian Reserve Corps the president called for, a group of 500 Americans from around the country with expertise in such areas as engineering, medicine and policing, to be tapped for specific deployments. The corps could be deployed globally wherever America's interests lie, to help nations emerging from civil war, for instance, or to mitigate circumstances in failed states that endanger our security.

If Congress acts soon, the administration may be able to deploy the reconstruction corps in Iraq and Afghanistan. But future conflicts are equally important. If we are to win the war on terrorism, we cannot allow states to crumble or remain incapable of governing.

We have seen how terrorists can exploit countries afflicted by lawlessness and desperate circumstances. The United States must have the right non-military structures, personnel and resources in place when an emergency occurs. A delay in our response can mean the difference between success and failure.

Congress has already appropriated \$50 million for initial funding, and an authorization to expend these funds is required. The bill is widely supported on both sides of the aisle and could be adopted quickly.

Yet this legislation is being blocked on the faulty premise that the task can be accomplished with existing personnel and organization. In our view, that does not square with either recent experience or the judgment of our generals and commander in chief.

It would be penny-wise but pound-foolish to continue to overburden our military with reconstruction duties. We urge Congress to stand up for our troops by giving them the civilian help they need.

Released on December 17, 2007



[Updates](#) | [Frequent Questions](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Email this Page](#) | [Subject Index](#) | [Search](#)

The Office of Electronic Information, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

[About state.gov](#) | [Privacy Notice](#) | [FOIA](#) | [Copyright Information](#) | [Other U.S. Government Information](#)