

**Statement before the House Committee on Appropriations,
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs**

***“THE ROLE OF CIVILIAN AND MILITARY AGENCIES IN
THE ADVANCEMENT OF AMERICA’S DIPLOMATIC AND
DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES”***

A Statement by

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Chairwoman Lowey, Ranking Member Granger, distinguished members of the Subcommittee; I am honored to be invited to appear before you today on this timely and very important topic.

I am impressed by the thoughtful title of this hearing—The Role of Civilian and Military Agencies in the Advancement of America’s Diplomatic and Development Objectives. Too often I hear heated debates in Washington about the military encroaching on foreign policy. It is refreshing to approach this topic in such a thoughtful way, and I congratulate the Chairwoman and the members of the Committee for holding such an important hearing.

Military Activities are inherently “political” activities

Military activities are only one means by which America tries to achieve its policy objectives. There is great controversy surrounding the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is perfectly appropriate for us to have a national debate on such an important question as America going to war. It is understandable that the internal details of those military activities assume political significance. In recent years there has been a great deal of debate about the appropriate role of civilian and military departments in our operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Some critics have said that America has militarized foreign policy, turning over inherently civilian tasks to a bureaucratically aggressive military. Others argue that the U.S. civilian agencies just didn’t “show up” to carry out their responsibilities in Iraq. Both camps will find evidence to support their positions. I would like to approach the topic less to validate one point of view or the other, but instead to find directions for the future use of our total national resources.

Waging war is inherently a political exercise. By this, I don’t mean partisan politics—Republicans versus Democrats. War is only one way that nations try to achieve policy objectives. Diplomacy is another way. Development assistance is a third. The United States has a broad array of tools that it uses to accomplish its policy objectives on the international stage. Waging war is inherently a narrow and extremely costly way to achieve objectives. The goal of our national policies—and the central goal of our military forces—is to find ways to achieve our objectives without resorting to war. The foundation of our defense policy is deterrence, after all.

Unfortunately there are times when national purposes can only be achieved through military action. But even in these circumstances, war is still a political act by a sovereign state. Military activities are surrounded and infused by other policy actions.

During the Cold War we fielded a massive standing Army in Europe on an ongoing basis. We had over 350,000 military personnel in theater. But that Army was there to give force to a broader national strategy of containment. We knew we could not defeat the Soviet Union militarily. But we could deter their political intimidation, and contain them until America’s soft powers—our economic, diplomatic and cultural powers—overwhelmed the Soviet ideology and system.

Conventional wars—and the most recent example of that was in Iraq in 1991—are similarly a blend of military and non-military activities. President Bush assembled an international coalition to evict Iraqi military forces from Kuwait. President Bush combined military and non-military tools to accomplish those objectives.

In conventional wars, the goal of military action is to break the will of the leadership of the opponent country, to quickly demonstrate that their objectives are blocked and the price they pay for continued conflict is disproportionately painful compared to their objectives. Again, military and non-military tools are brought to the task. While U.S. military forces battle opponent forces, our diplomatic efforts seek to isolate the opponent and pressure sober change in their goals and activities.

Securing Policy Objectives in Insurgency Wars

These conventional tools are the ones we have needed most often through our history, and we have developed them more fully. Insurgency warfare is arguably far more complex than conventional warfare. The opponent often is not a state that can be intimidated through traditional military means. The opponent avoids traditional battle methods and takes refuge in the civilian population. It has taken us a long time to re-learn this lesson in Iraq, but we now know that insurgency warfare is not about overwhelming violence. It is about political persuasion broadly to a frightened and angry population. The goal of effective insurgency warfare is the support and protection of the civilian population.

Again, insurgency warfare, like conventional warfare, blends military and non-military methods and tools. Both military and non-military tools must be adapted to a different context. In conventional war, diplomatic activities take place in the quiet chambers of foreign ministries. Effective insurgency warfare requires diplomats and other civilians from government and NGOs to wear body armor and move into dangerous settings along side military forces.

And at the same time we are “fighting” the insurgents, we need to be building support for our cause among civilian populations. This requires a full range of tools. Economic tools become as important—or I would argue more important—than military tools.

Seven years ago—before the war in Iraq was launched—my think tank, the Center for Strategic and International Studies—launched a program we called “post conflict reconstruction.” We saw the great problems we were having in the Balkans. We could easily overthrow an opponent army, but we had enormous problems re-building civil society after the war. We started our project by examining the 50 plus wars that have taken place around the world since World War II. We examined each of them and categorized the essential tasks required in the three critical phases of every war—the conflict phase, the security stabilization phase, and the recovery/development phase. Six months before the war in Iraq started, we produced a blueprint for the tasks that would lie

ahead if we were to invade Iraq. Unfortunately these past six years have confirmed what we discovered through this historical inquiry.

An Honest Appraisal of our performance in Iraq

Permit me to offer an honest critique of these past six years. We went into Iraq with a superficial idea of what lay ahead in terms of the stabilization phase of warfare. We didn't understand insurgency warfare, and it took us years to realize that the true objective was the hearts and minds of civilians, not defeating insurgents with military means. We had an inadequate security model in our minds. In the opening months and early years in Iraq, our military concentrated on opponents who were shooting at them. They ignored the broader insecurity facing Iraqi citizens. I saw this first hand when I first visited Iraq in June, 2003, only 3 months after we overthrew the Saddam government.

We thought we could easily create a government from the top down in a tribal society, where political legitimacy grows from the bottom, not the top. The Defense Department initially spurned the involvement of other agencies in the U.S. Government. And when it realized it needed those agencies, it was in the middle of a difficult insurgency where it could not provide a secure environment.

The civilian agencies lacked effective capabilities that they could send to the field. In some instances, this was the product of years of underfunding. In other instances, the agencies and bureaus lack an operational culture. And in other instances, we lack the resources within the federal government. We don't have deployable judges who can train local jurists and re-establish rule of law, for example. Neither the State Department nor the Defense Department nor the Justice Department has deployable resources to supplement cops and judges during the transition phases of stabilization.

The Defense Department stumbled its way through these problems. The Defense Department is a learning organization—maybe slowly—but a learning organization nonetheless. They came to realize they needed anthropologists, economists, linguists, religious experts and jurists. They came to realize that winning hearts and minds involved a far broader range of tools and resources.

So where do we stand today?

So where are we now? We know all this now. If we had to wage an insurgency warfare again, what do we have? Sadly, I must say not much more than we had six years ago. The State Department is marginally larger, but that increase has gone almost exclusively to build a massive embassy in Baghdad. USAID is wiser, but not effectively any different than it was six years ago. We still need to use contractors to train cops, build temporary jails and support judges.

If we went to war tomorrow in a totally new circumstance, our military would still largely have to improvise in the field, hopefully far more effectively than we did initially

in Iraq. We have taken some steps to build greater civilian “surge” capacity within the federal government, but have not yet achieved sufficient or sustainable results. The State Department is not dramatically more operational today than six years ago. The deployable resources in the Federal Government are not appreciably different than at the outset of the Iraq war.

As many of you know, CSIS was the secretariat for the commission headed by former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, and Harvard Professor Joseph Nye’s report “Smart Power” which lays out an approach to integrate America’s coercive “hard” and “soft” powers of attraction. This theme has now been taken up by both Secretary Gates and Secretary Clinton.

I know from hundreds of conversations with senior officers and NCOs during the past several years, that DoD does not want to fight these insurgency wars alone. It genuinely wants civilian partners in the field. Our senior military leaders now know that a successful strategy is largely non-kinetic—military speak for soft power, not hard power. And frankly, the military is so strapped financially that it does not want to spend money on soft power tools.

Strategic Directions going forward

Madam Chairwoman, distinguished members of the committee, we need to solve this problem. I fear the future is more likely one of insurgency warfare rather than conventional warfare. So may I offer the following suggestions, from a Defense Department standpoint?

First, please fund the State Department, USAID, and other agencies to shoulder their responsibilities today and build capacity for tomorrow. They do need more resources to do this.

Second, you must challenge these civilian agencies to get beyond the Washington turf-wars and develop capabilities to undertake operations in the field, and in unstable security environments. You can’t blame DoD for undertaking these activities if civilian agencies can’t accompany them into the field.

Third, we need a clearer delineation of the working relationship between the government and vast spectrum of contractors that undertake government tasks in the field in both civilian and security functions. We have stumbled our way through this difficult problem. We used contractors because we did not have the needed skills in sufficient quantity within the government. But we never developed a clear policy or legal framework to govern their activities. We now may be erring on the other side by creating an ambiguous legal environment that puts their work in jeopardy.

Fourth, we need a major assessment of how to work effectively with non-governmental organizations in complex security environments. I have seen this happen on numerous occasions. The military goes into a mission, initially sees non-

governmental organizations an irritating distraction, only to subsequently learn that NGOs provide tools and resources that they need to accomplish overall success.

This is especially complex in insurgency wars. The opponent intentionally blends into civilian life. This creates a very ambiguous environment for non-governmental civilians that cooperate with the U.S. government. We have developed informal procedures for conventional wars, but have not yet worked out these procedures for insurgency wars, especially during the period of heightened insecurity. I personally believe the Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense should jointly commission a major review of this question. We have worked through problems on an ad hoc basis in Iraq and Afghanistan. But I suspect we do not have a sustainable framework going forward.

Conclusion

Madam Chairwoman, Ranking Member Granger, distinguished members of the Committee; I congratulate you for addressing such an important question. The politics of the past six years has complicated your task. We lacked a sound policy framework to guide us on the appropriate and constructive integration of military and non-military agencies and activities in conflict situations. We do need to solve this problem. This hearing is an important step along that important journey. Thank you for inviting me to be a part of it.