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Confirmation Hearing of Hillary Clinton before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Hart Senate Office Building, Room 216
200 2nd St, NW, January 13, 2009, 9:30 am

As his first act as Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, **Senator John Kerry** (D-MA) opened the confirmation hearing for **Secretary of State-designate Hillary Clinton** by commenting on her “global stature” and the asset this will be in helping her to shape the course of events. The global community will be looking to our leadership, he said, and Clinton’s record in the Senate as an alliance builder will help to further our global leadership goals. He called for a greater connection of issues pertaining to the Middle East; such as Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan and encouraged interfaith dialogue to allay suspicions of U.S. motives abroad, especially in the Muslim world.

In his opening statement, Republican Ranking Member **Senator Richard Lugar** (IN) discussed how the nominee for Secretary of State should be a “big leaguer,” claiming that “Hillary is the epitome of a big leaguer” because she is well-known abroad and has established relationships with world leaders. He highlighted issues of priority in the foreign policy realm such as renewing the START treaty with Russia, elevating the importance of energy security, and eradicating hunger. While he did not feel that there was much standing in the way of Hillary Clinton’s confirmation as Secretary of State, he did express concern (along with other members of the committee) over how her government service can be rectified with the global business engaged through the Clinton foundation.

Secretary of State-designate Hillary Clinton was then introduced by **Sen. Chuck Schumer** (D-NY), who declared that “no one would better serve our country and the world” and that she is “the right person at the right time.” As Clinton began her opening remarks, she reflected on the importance of fostering “diplomacy that enhances security, advances our interests, and reflects our values.” She mentioned some of the major problems facing our world today – the fighting in Gaza, terrorism in Mumbai, piracy near the Horn of Africa, Zimbabwe, and human trafficking. **She emphasized the importance of building “a world with more partners and fewer adversaries”** and pledged to use the full range of tools at her disposal – choosing the right combination of tools for each situation. She also emphasized that the U.S. will lead with diplomacy but military force may be needed at times. **With regard to the Middle East, Clinton focused on ending the war in Iraq, preventing Iran from going nuclear, enhancing stability and security in Afghanistan, and using “smart power” to address the security concerns of Israel and the development of Palestine.** As a final point, she stressed that the State Department and USAID must have the appropriate resources to move forward and operate effectively.

Senator Kerry opened the question and answer session with a focus on Iran's nuclear program, asking Clinton what additional incentives might be available and whether tougher sanctions are achievable. Clinton emphasized that while the administration will keep all options on the table, the goal will be to do everything possible through diplomacy and sanctions while enlisting the help of others. She declined to comment on the nature of new sanctions that might be utilized. Kerry asked if the administration would send a U.S. representative to the region to engage in discussions immediately. Clinton responded by saying that we will engage with friends as **President Obama would like to try new approaches in consultation with regional partners.** When asked if she would engage in personal diplomacy with high level officials, work to establish an interest section in Tehran, and send an ambassador to Syria, she declined a definitive answer, saying that she will turn to these issues when she is in a position to do so.

Senator Bob Corker (R-TN) questioned Clinton on how she would ensure that the State Department received the necessary management. She replied that she would be appointing James Steinberg and Jacob Lew for the two posts of deputy secretary of state, with Steinberg's focus on policy and Lew's focus on management and budget issues. She also discussed the need to reevaluate aid and development efforts, arguing that over the years "USAID has been decimated." While efforts by the military to rebuild infrastructure in Afghanistan and Iraq have been successful at times, she stressed the importance of focusing more resources in the hands of aid experts.

Senator Russ Feingold (D-WI) asked Clinton how the administration plans to redeploy troops from Iraq in 16 months. She replied that this will be done in the context of the Status of Forces Agreement, with the U.S. beginning to remove forces in June and redeploying some troops to Afghanistan. Additionally, **the U.S. will continue working with Iraqis on rule of law, education, and infrastructure, and quickly appoint a new ambassador to Iraq.** In regard to the growing instability in Afghanistan, Feingold questioned how sending more troops will fit into a comprehensive strategy. Clinton emphasized Obama's "more for more strategy," outlining how more U.S. troops will also require more support from NATO and the Afghan government. Additionally, there must be a civilian presence on the ground to compliment the military one. She also stressed the need to involve Pakistan in the process as it has a vested interest in the future stability of Afghanistan.

Senator Lugar questioned how the State Department will work with the Department of Defense in stemming the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Clinton spoke of the diminishment of proliferation initiatives and a need to rebuild them more robustly. As a willing and active partner in nonproliferation, the State Department will be seeking arms control experts to fill various positions. She also underlined a strong commitment to the START treaty negotiations.

Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) focused her questioning on women's rights issues, asking Clinton to comment on her commitment to protecting women worldwide. Clinton responded by stressing that this issue is central to U.S. foreign policy and will most certainly be a priority. She discussed how **she will work to persuade more governments that we cannot have a free and prosperous world if women are treated in a discriminatory and violent way.** If half of the world's population is not allowed to live to its full potential, she argued, then we cannot progress as a society.

Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD) mentioned Iraq's refugee problem and questioned how we can come to grips with a lasting solution. Clinton answered that working to solve refugee problems worldwide will be an important priority for the State Department. She will ensure that this problem receives due attention by staffing the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration with knowledgeable individuals.

Senator Jim Demint (R-SC) highlighted the importance of trade and commerce in relation to development and asked if Clinton would comment on the facilitation of private sector work in this regard. She replied by stating that the goals of diplomacy and development should include private sector work, however, this cannot replace the work of the State Department. She pledged to work hard to streamline and enhance the work of State and USAID to more efficiently handle its development responsibilities. Demint also commented that it is "naïve and illogical" to collaborate with countries who do not recognize Israel and questioned how Clinton would handle this issue. She stated that **the bottom line is that any agreement we enter must reflect our interests. We cannot negotiate with an organization such as Hamas until it recognizes Israel and follows through on agreements.**

Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ) asked how Clinton would work to elevate foreign assistance and build up the staff of USAID. She stated that this would be "pursued vigorously," explaining that a system will be put in place to rationalize State's current resources and get a handle on the contracting out of development work. She underscored programs such as PEPFAR and the Millennium Challenge Corporation, saying that she would build on this type of work and make a case for the increased resources that are "so desperately needed."

Senator Isakson (R-GA) expressed his agreement with Clinton's campaign position in regards to preconditions for engaging Islamist groups like Hamas and Hizbollah. **Clinton reaffirmed her commitment to ensure necessary preconditions had been met before engaging any entity in dialogue.** Of note, she also articulated President-elect Obama's agreement that preconditions should be met when engaging such groups if it is deemed necessary to meet the goals of such engagement.

In response to questions by **Senator Casey** (D-PA), Clinton repeated a theme which prevailed throughout the hearing; that strengthening the civil institutions of diplomacy will be a priority under her leadership at the State Department and for the Obama administration. Senator Casey also asked her to address some of the key issues she is likely to engage in early in her tenure, including U.S. relations with Pakistan. She acknowledged the complexity of the relationship and expressed optimism that the U.S. would maintain a "very active positive relationship" with the democratically elected Pakistani government.

In his concluding round of questions, **Senator Kerry** returned to the Middle East in describing time he had spent with Palestinian **President Mahmoud Abbas**. Senator Kerry explained how President Abbas is in a difficult position regarding his interaction with Hamas, as they have successfully provided critical public services which he has been unable to replace. Kerry voiced his frustration with U.S. foreign policy in this regard, saying "we have done almost nothing to help them deliver that capacity." In her response, Clinton reiterated the President-elect's previous statements, saying "we are at a point where the current administration is working

very hard behind the scenes and in front of the scenes and we don't want to say or do anything to interrupt or undermine what they're doing.” However, she did express her interest in helping to ensure the capacity of the Palestinian Authority and lauded the efforts of General Dayton in his effort to train Palestinian Authority forces tasked with maintaining security throughout the West Bank. In her opinion, **a ceasefire, while an “initial challenge,” is not the long term answer.** Finding ways to rebuild trust and to ensure the capacity of the Palestinian Authority will be priorities according to Clinton.