

CENTER FOR GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

**REMARKS BY
SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ (D-NJ)**

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SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ (D-NJ): (In progress) – feels that Senator Coburn has held up anything that has anything foreign in it is a problem. However, we have had moments where we've, for example, passed the 50 billion for global aid. So while it's hard, it's not impossible. And right now, we don't need consensus. We need to get closer to 60 votes so that we don't – at least on the Senate side – so that we don't face the consequences of a filibuster. Hopefully, in the next Congress, there will be a new crop of members that will be more enlightened on this issue.

Finally, I know there's a lot of talk about how to structure our foreign assistance in Washington and I think it is a very, very important, not only conversation but a critical part of how we move forward in this new century. We have a foreign assistance structure that has not only been debilitated over time both in resources and in human capacity in terms of its ability to deliver. It has also been out of date with the way foreign assistance was viewed from the last century. So let me just say I think it's critical to maintain the independence and integrity of an entity and I'm not sure that it would be AID but of a U.S. development agency.

I think it's very critical. The goals of the State Department are not always the goals of development assistance. Exactly how we do this, whether it is a cabinet-level department agency or a reengineered USAID as part of the discussion that I'm sure will take place today that is generated by the book that has been generated by many who are involved in the development assistance work. I do believe that development requires a strong, independent voice that the president can turn to and that international leaders will recognize.

Second, it's not enough to simply know what to do. We have to know how to do it in the complex context of the developing world, which I don't have to tell you is fraught with the competing forces of politics, power and money. If knowledge about what to do and the collective resources to do it were enough, we would have universal health care and a solid education for everyone in this country. So the reality is, is that in and of itself, having the knowledge and the collective resources is not enough. It's how, in fact, we are able to achieve the deployment of that knowledge and the collective resources to achieve our goal.

And in terms of how to do it, when I look presently and we've held a series on this because I'm really concerned that we are decimating a lot of institutional knowledge in terms of the capacity to deliver development assistance. And I worry about just contracting out because, at the end of the day, your command and control ability to – within the context of what your overall goals are, are increasingly diminished in that respect in terms of achieving your goal. It has a place but not at the rate that we have – in my view – not at the rate that we have been going at it.

The staff of USAID is stretched too thin. Their programs are getting pulled in too many directions. The agency has lost personnel and expertise. Too many core functions are being performed by contractors and outside groups. Without strong leadership and a

clear vision and a highly capable staff to carry out that vision, we risk a formulaic appropriation and application of off-the-shelf ideas. As we know, in this business, formulas don't always give you the results you expect and sometimes ideas are put on the shelf for a very good reason, not to be used again. (Chuckles.) And so that is one of our challenges and the loss of USAID staff also means we risk turning more and more of our development programs to the military.

Having just come back from Iraq in January; Afghanistan in August, I can tell you that increasingly more and more of what we would consider core development assistance and institution building has gone to the military versus, in fact, those entities that are supposed to do that. And while we need, obviously, coordination in pursuit of our strategic interest, at the same time, I think it just makes a fundamental mistake. You know, when you give development assistance to a military entity, people look at it and say they may be, for the moment, relieved to get that assistance but at the end of the day they know it's for a purpose and that is the purpose – the military's purpose to seek a some sort of an immediate benefit that they are trying to advance.

When you do development assistance by civilian entities, it is about the United States and its people helping those people in common cause and the message it sends is fundamentally different at the end of the day. And so I think we have to worry about if we do not get our development assistance in order, not only in terms of resources and mission but also in how it is delivered and who delivers it, I think we risk increasingly see the military an ever-increasing part of what is supposed to be development assistance and so that loss of staff means we risk turning more and more of that over to the military. They see critical gaps and they are filling those gaps if civilian agencies cannot carry the water.

And, finally, one of the divides I see among those who advocate for foreign assistance is between those who know what to do: the intellectuals, analysts, and academics; those who are out there doing it: fieldworkers and the NGO, the recipient governments, their health ministers, for example, foreign government policymakers; and those who have the power to shape the overall direction of our assistance, namely the U.S. Congress, the State Department, and entities like AID. The center, I'm proud to say, focuses on trying to bridge the divide and I certainly want to urge you, Nancy, and all of your colleagues at the center, and all who care about this issue to think about that as well.

While we may be advocates for any single element of this, at the end of the day, bridging that divide between those who create the policies, those who deliver the intentions of those programs and that assistance, the countries which we are engaged in and the community that is a advocate for this, those are the critical elements to bring together in common cause for what I think can be a powerful opportunity and a moment in history, next year, to change the course of events of where we have been on foreign assistance and to use it as a really powerful tool of peaceful diplomacy, good will in the world and making the United States known, not just for the power of its bombs but for the power of its intellect and it's ability to deliver good things for the people on the face

of this planet. Thank you very much and, Nancy, congratulations to you and your colleagues.

(Applause.)

(END)