

Leader

Senator McCain on U.S. Foreign Policy Post-September 11

Washington, 23 July 2003—Peacekeeping in Afghanistan and the need for assistance from the United Nations (UN) and NATO in rebuilding Iraq are at the top of the list of U.S. foreign policy issues facing the Bush Administration in a post-September 11 world, said U.S. Senator John McCain (R-AZ).

In a recent interview for *International Affairs Review*, McCain discussed the peacekeeping and rebuilding efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq now that the wars in those regions are officially over. Regarding the United States' role in these efforts, he said the work is going to be "transitional."

"First, we need to have the military put down the remaining guerilla-type elements and then transition to more socioeconomic development," he said. "And we need the assistance of the UN and NATO in doing so."

McCain also sees a role for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the rebuilding of Iraq.

"I think that NGOs are good," McCain said, "but NGOs can only operate in an environment where they are secure." That's why it's important that Iraq becomes secure before we should expect rebuilding efforts to show signs of success.

In the peacekeeping and rebuilding efforts in Afghanistan, the United States has had significant participation from its allies. Even with this cooperative effort, however, security is an ongoing concern. It is clear, McCain said, that President Karzai has very little control of the country outside of the capital Kabul.

"I always felt that the U.S. should do more in the area of peacekeeping," he added.

When asked if the United States should intervene in Liberia and what the

conditions for intervention would be, McCain responded: “I think the U.S. should intervene to stop the slaughter of innocent people that is taking place. Obviously they need a plan, but the British have been successful in Sierra Leone and the French in the Ivory Coast, so there is no reason why we shouldn’t be able to succeed there.”

“We have a special relationship with Liberia because we were instrumental in its founding, so I think in that sense the U.S. should play a lead role,” he added. But any U.S. military intervention, McCain said, should only happen when the United States has exhausted all other options.

A long-standing and complicated U.S. foreign policy issue is the United States’ military presence in South Korea. McCain said he believes that the United States’ military presence there—in the form of air assets in particular—does deter aggressive actions by North Korea.

“But I think it was a wise move to move our troops south from the DMZ [Demilitarized Zone] so they are no longer a ‘trip wire,’” he said.

To help resolve the conflict there, the United States should look at every choice, he said, including using the U.S. military, which is always the last alternative.

McCain said he thinks a key to resolving the problems between North and South Korea will be cooperation and assistance from China. “I think the end result we should hope for is a unified Korea. They are one people,” he concluded.

McCain has received numerous awards from taxpayer and foreign policy organizations for his distinguished public service and leadership. After graduating from the United States Naval Academy in 1958, he began a 22-year career as a naval aviator. In 1967, he was shot down over Vietnam and held as a prisoner of war in Hanoi for five and a half years, much of it in solitary confinement. He retired from the Navy in 1981. His naval honors include the Silver Star, Bronze Star, Legion of Merit, Purple Heart, and Distinguished Flying Cross. Throughout his career, McCain has been outspoken in favor of a strong national defense and “sound” U.S. foreign policy.