

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1401

March 23, 2011

The Honorable John Kerry
Chairman Senate Foreign Relations Committee
218 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear John,

I write to request Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings on the U.S. government's ongoing intervention in the Libyan civil war and the innumerable policy considerations that flow from that intervention. I noted a newspaper story today that cited one of your spokesmen as saying that there are no plans for hearings on Libya. That statement may not accurately reflect your own intent. But I wanted to make clear that I believe prompt hearings on Libya in our Committee are essential.

Any U.S. military intervention in a foreign country would require oversight hearings by the Foreign Relations Committee. In my judgment, hearings on Libya are especially vital because the Obama Administration did not consult meaningfully with Congress before initiating military operations. Members have not yet had an opportunity to question the Administration on its policy goals or its diplomatic and military strategy. The Administration has not defined the U.S. strategic interest in Libya or adequately articulated how the conflict ends. Questions remain about how the coalition will function going forward and what role the U.S. will play among our allies. Administration ambiguity on these points is impacting our military activities, the cohesion of the coalition, and public attitudes towards the war.

We also know little about the Libyan opposition or the Administration's plans for paying for the war. It is not clear that the Obama Administration has thought through the consequences of this action for regional stability, the fight against terrorism, the impact on oil markets, and other factors.

I believe hearings not only would provide some important answers to Senators and to the American people, they would induce the Obama Administration to conduct in-depth contingency planning that does not seem to have occurred. Is the Administration planning for the range of potential outcomes, including a prolonged stalemate in which Col. Qadhafi remains in power in Tripoli? All scenarios in Libya will have significant budget implications at a time when Congress is focused on achieving budget savings. We need to discuss this now, so the American people know what may be asked of them.

An enclosed article by Tom Friedman poses many additional questions that should be explored in hearings on the Libya intervention.

I appreciate the hearing on upheaval in the broader Middle East that we held with Undersecretary Burns on March 17, before the coalition intervened in Libya. As you know, in that hearing, I expressed serious doubts about a U.S. military intervention and urged the President to seek a declaration of war if he ordered an attack on Libya. I continue to advocate for a Senate floor debate on this question. If such a floor debate occurs, hearings in our Committee would be an important contribution to Congress' base of knowledge and inquiry.

I have no doubts that our military can accomplish whatever mission it is assigned. We must fulfill our constitutional role to ensure that their efforts are part of a coherent national strategy. I appreciate your consideration of my views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Richard G. Lugar". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent flourish at the end.

Richard G. Lugar
United States Senator

RGL/ddd