

Nunn's hearings begin with testimony by former cabinet member Schlesinger

The Senate Armed Services Committee, under the leadership of Georgia Democrat Sam Nunn, convened week-long hearings on U.S. Policy in the Persian Gulf on Nov. 27. After short introductory remarks by Nunn and John Warner (R-Va.), the committee heard James R. Schlesinger, who is scheduled to be followed by numerous other former government officials during the rest of the week.

Nunn has been a vocal critic of President Bush's change in policy from defense to offense in the Persian Gulf, and his opening remarks reflected his criticism. The senator, and prospective presidential candidate, also noted, however, that he agrees with the President's pursuit of a United Nations resolution authorizing force, and considers war in the Gulf "justified," but not necessarily "wise at this time and in our national interest."

While Nunn has received much press coverage, less attention has been given to the remarks of Schlesinger, who was defense secretary under President Gerald Ford and later, secretary of energy under President Jimmy Carter. His views reflect a broad consensus among the nation's foreign policy elite, who are increasingly questioning George Bush's judgment in pressing toward war.

Excerpts of Schlesinger's written statement follow. (Subheads have been added by the editors.)

. . . Mr. Chairman, if you will permit, I shall deal initially with the shape of the post-Cold War world in which the sharp ideological divisions and the coalitions and alliances polarized to reflect those differences have now been muted. Some, stimulated by the response to the crisis in the Gulf, have expressed the hope that we are now engaged in fashioning a new international order—in which violators of international norms will be regularly constrained or disciplined through the instrument of collective security. Put very briefly, Mr. Chairman, I believe that such aspirations for a Wilsonian utopia are doomed to disappointment. What is emerging is likely to resemble the somewhat disordered conditions before 1938—an era of old-fashioned power politics—marked by national and ethnic rivalries and hatreds, religious tensions, as well as smash and grab, and the pursuit of loot. . . .

What are America's interests

Mr. Chairman, you and Senator Warner have posed the question: What are America's interests in the Gulf. I shall mention three. . . .

First, is oil. There is no way of evading this simple reality. Oil provides the energy source that drives the economies of the industrial and underdeveloped worlds. Were the principal exports of the region palm dates, or pearls, or even industrial products, our response to Iraq's transgression would have been far slower and far less massive than has been the case. Nonetheless, this should not be misunderstood. Our concern is not primarily economic—the price of gasoline at the pump. Were we primarily concerned about the price of oil, we would not have sought to impose an embargo that drove it above \$40 a barrel. Instead, our concern is strategic: We cannot allow so large a portion of the world's energy resources to fall under the domination of a single hostile party. . . .

Second, the United States has had an intimate relationship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. . . . It is embodied in the Carter Doctrine, which pledges military resistance to external assaults on the Kingdom, as well as the Reagan corollary, which subsequently pledged resistance to internal subversion. Failure of the United States to honor such commitments would raise questions about the seriousness of the United States, not only in the Middle East but elsewhere. . . .

Third, since the close of World War II and, particularly, since the establishment of the State of Israel, the United States has had a generalized commitment to the stability of the Middle East and to the security of Israel. On numerous occasions this generalized commitment has led to U.S. diplomatic or military involvement in the region—not always marked by complete success.

Alternative strategies

Let me turn now to the alternative strategies available to the United States and its allies. The first, of course, is to allow the weight of the economic sanctions, imposed in August, gradually to wear down the capacity and the will of Iraq to sustain its present position. The embargo, backed up by a

naval blockade, is the most successful ever achieved aside from time of war. Early on it was officially estimated that it would require a year for the embargo to work. It now appears to be working more rapidly than anticipated. In three months time *civilian* production is estimated to have declined by some 40%. Oil exports are nil—and export earnings have dropped correspondingly. The hoard of hard currency, necessary to sustain smuggling, is dwindling away. The economic pressure can only grow worse.

While Iraq's military posture does not appear to have been seriously affected as yet, as the months go by that too will be seriously weakened. Lack of spare parts will force Iraq to begin to cannibalize its military equipment. Military industry, as yet significantly unaffected, will follow the downward path of civilian industry. In short, the burden on both Iraq's economy and her military strength will steadily increase.

We know that such burdens must ultimately affect political judgment and political will. In time, the original objectives of the United Nations will be attained. Already, Saddam Hussein shows a willingness, if not an eagerness, to compromise. One no longer hears that Kuwait is for all eternity the 19th province of Iraq. But for some *ultimately* may not be soon enough, and for others the original objectives may not be sufficient.

To the extent that those original objectives are augmented by demands that Saddam Hussein stand trial as a war criminal, that Iraq provide compensation for the damage it has done, that Iraq's military capacity must be dismantled or destroyed, or that Saddam Hussein must be removed from power, Saddam's determination to hang on will be strengthened. Some may prefer such a response in that it precludes a settlement and makes recourse to military force more likely. Nonetheless, if one avoids this list of additional demands and is satisfied with the original objectives, the probability that the economic sanctions will result in a satisfactory outcome is very high. One should note that, since the original estimate was that the sanctions route would require a year, it seems rather illogical to express impatience with them, because they will not have produced the hoped-for results in six months' time. . . .

Victory at what cost?

There is little question that the United States and its allies can inflict a crippling military defeat on Iraq. It can eject Iraq from Kuwait; it can destroy Iraq's military forces and military industries; it can destroy, if it wishes, Iraq's cities. The question is at what cost—and whether it is wise to incur that cost. Whenever a nation accepts the hazards of war, the precise outcome is not predetermined. Depending upon the military strategy chosen and the tenacity of Iraq's forces, there could be a considerable variation in the outcome. In the event of an all-out assault on entrenched Iraqi positions, the casualties may be expected to run into several tens of thousands. How-

ever, if we avoid that all-out assault, make use of our decisive advantages in the air, and exploit the opponent's vulnerabilities by our own mobility, the casualties could be held to a fraction of the prior estimate. In between four and eight weeks, it should all be over—save for starving out or mopping up the remaining Iraqi forces in Kuwait. The question then becomes whether one goes on to occupy Iraq, to destroy the balance of Iraqi forces, and the like. That would be far more difficult and time consuming, but circumstances may make it unavoidable. . . .

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I close with observations regarding two inherent difficulties in the emerging situation. First, if the United States conveys the impression that it has moved beyond the original international objectives to the sterner objectives that Saddam Hussein must go, that Iraq's military establishment and the threat to the region must be dismantled or eliminated, etc., then whatever incentive Saddam Hussein may presently have to acquiesce in the international community's present demands and to leave Kuwait will shrink toward zero. This may please those who have decided that the war option is the preferable one, but it makes it increasingly hard to hold together the international coalition, which we initially put together to bless our actions in the Gulf. That brings us to the second observation: The more we rely on the image of Iraq as an outlaw state to justify taking military action, the more we make holding together the international coalition inherently difficult, if not impossible. International approval of our actions is something on which the Administration has set great store. It has provided the desired legitimacy. To abandon it would mean the undermining of any claim to establishing a new international order.

Isn't Eastern Europe more important?

Mr. Chairman, if you will allow me one final word that goes beyond the crisis in the Gulf. That crisis has preoccupied our attention for more than three months and is likely to do so for many months more. It has diverted our attention from subjects that may be of equal or even greater importance. Six months ago all of us were deeply moved by the developments in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union—and with the prospect that those nations might move toward democracy and economic reform. Members of this Committee will recall our high hopes at that time. Yet, in the intervening period, with the diverting of our attention to the Gulf, those prospects have been dealt a grievous blow. First was the Soviet decision to force the former satellites to pay hard currency for their oil. Second, it was followed by the Gulf crisis that has sharply raised the international price of oil. The prospects and hopes for Eastern Europe, while our attention has been diverted, have been seriously damaged. Yet, to return to my original theme, in the shaping of the post-Cold War world it is not clear that the evolution of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union may not be more important than developments in the Gulf.