

Promoting Religious Freedom During the Campaign Against Terrorism": Panel 2 Subpanel B Question and Answer

(left to right): Martha Brill Olcott, The Hon. Susan Rice, and Sidney Jones

CHAIRMAN YOUNG: Thank you very much. We have about 10 to 15 minutes for questions. Ambassador Stith.

COMMISSIONER STITH: I have a question for Dr. Susan Rice, but before I ask my question, let me just say, having lived with the investigation of the bombing of our embassy in Tanzania for the two-and-a-half years I was Ambassador there, I appreciate very much your analysis and your remarks. In your testimony, you used the phrase "drain the swamp" as a metaphor for dealing systematically with the systemic conditions that breed terrorism. In your opinion, does the African Growth and Opportunity Act provide an adequate policy framework as it relates to trade and investment, that trade and investment being necessary to drain the swamp that breeds terrorism? And if AGOA is not enough, what else do we need to do in order to enhance the trade and investment agenda we need to develop vis-a-vis Africa?

DR. RICE: Thank you, Ambassador Stith, for your comments, and for a very important question. I think the African Growth and Opportunity Act is a critical piece of legislation, an important first step, but it's not enough. It's not enough because it is the beginning of enhanced market access for African goods and services, but it is not complete and unfettered market access, and that, as I called for in my testimony, is something that we need to consider, and I would argue, implement in the short term, not just for Africa but other underdeveloped parts of the world if we are going to give them a meaningful opportunity for a leg up and to participate in the reality of globalization as opposed to working to undermine it. Secondly, on the investment side, the African Growth and Opportunity Act is effectively silent. There is not in place, apart from rhetoric and some OPEC financing, any meaningful tools to promote greater American investment in Africa. This is something that I think the new administration ought to take a serious look at. I think it's something that they're favorably disposed toward, but there ought to be a companion, in my judgment, to the African Growth and Opportunity Act that is equally robust on the investment side, and I think we ought to be bold enough to consider such things as tax incentives and tax breaks for American companies that take the affirmative step of directly investing in Africa and elsewhere.

CHAIRMAN YOUNG: Thank you. Dr. Land?

COMMISSIONER LAND: Thank you. I want to thank all three of you for very direct and very helpful testimony. Dr. Rice, I'd like to ask you--I very much appreciated your comments about Sudan, and I share your skepticism about whether there has been a genuine conversion as yet. But what I think I hear you're saying--and I want to see if you could flesh this out for me--is the adoption of sort of a carrot and stick approach to the governments of the countries of Africa, whereby we would greatly increase the carrot of "we will help you; we will help you develop your own country; we will help you protect your citizens; we will help you drain these swamps of terrorism," but governments that are recalcitrant in doing so, governments that continue to oppress their own people or to ignore the needs of their own people, would be dealt with with more of a stick approach that you are encouraging that we keep in place with Sudan until they stop being one of the more egregious violators of human rights?

DR. RICE: I would say yes, but with some nuance. There are few countries in sub-Saharan Africa that fall into the category of Sudan, if any, and I think that is a special case and your Commission has treated it as such. There are obviously other countries whose role, much less its capacity to work with us constructively on terrorism, ought to be questioned. There are not many. The bulk of countries in sub-Saharan Africa, even those that one would argue fall short on the democratic spectrum, would rather work with us and see it as in their interest to work with us, not because they are afraid but because they see this as their problem as much as ours. And I can't underscore enough the impact that the embassy bombings had on the entire continent of Africa. Those were innocent Africans minding their own business who were blown up and killed in the largest numbers. So that will be--the capacity isn't, and I think it is in our national security interest to invest in building that capacity even perhaps in some places while the will might be present but where a country may not measure up as we would hope it might on some other issues. But, obviously, when it comes to our development assistance, this too is a long-term proposition. I would not want to see us get back to the days of the Cold War where we threw money around regardless of the principles or the stance of the government in question. Having said that, I think we may need to affect a rising tide that will lift many boats, and see this as a long-term imperative. At the same time, for those countries that are standouts on the egregious side of the spectrum, we have to continue to maintain a tough and principled line and employ the sticks that we have at our disposal.

CHAIRMAN YOUNG: Thank you. Dr. Kazemzadeh?

COMMISSIONER KAZEMZADEH: This is a question to all three panelists. There are rumors, and I would like to know from you to what extent they can be substantiated, that both Saudi Arabia and Iran have been providing ideological and perhaps financial help to extremist Islamic movements from Central Asia to Africa. Could you comment on that?

MS. JONES: There is clearly a lot of Saudi money coming in to Indonesia and Malaysia and the Southern Philippines, but it's going to groups which include perfectly legitimate Muslim welfare organizations, as well as in--it may include--but I don't have hard evidence--I know if the organizations--some of the organizations it's going to--the Muslim League based in Riyadh I think has been providing some funds to groups associated with the PPP and the Dewan Dakwah Islam in Jakarta, and it's mostly for proselytization in what they call Dakwah activities, but I don't know of any specific instances of Saudi money going to

some of these Laskar Jihad-like organizations, but I wouldn't be at all surprised if it did. And Iranian money, I don't know of Iranian funds going to Southeast Asia specifically. In the case of Africa, I would say in the past, and I would assume still in the present, there have been significant financial flows from various parts of the Middle East into Africa, including from Iran, from Libya, and in those cases, presumably including from the government. Also from Saudi Arabia, although to my knowledge, not necessarily government resources, but private financial flows to a range of institutions, to African Governments, to African charitable organizations real and feigned, and to into African business entities. This is a longstanding common economic nexus, not all of which or even most of which necessarily ought to be of great concern, but certainly some of it has been and is of concern. One of the particular problems that has been the case in Africa for some time is that a great deal of charitable giving has been done under the guise--which has been done under the guise of charity, has actually been used to support and finance criminal and indeed terrorist activities.

DR. OLCOTT: As the point was made about Southeast Asia, there has been Saudi assistance across the board, across the ideological specter of Islamic groups in Central Asia. In '92-'93 I met Gulf missionaries. I can't say if they came from Saudi Arabia or not, but they certainly were involved in sort of the Gulf fundamentalist movement throughout the mosques and the Ferghana Valley. In my most recent trip they were noticeably absent, but the structures that they helped erect--and these are mosques of people that are pro-regime Muslims and mosques of people that were fundamentalists and mosques of people who were Sufis--is really apparent. Overall though there has been much less Saudi and Iranian financial involvement in the Central Asian states than people anticipated in 1990. And at the same time, I think it's important to note that Turkey is a major funnel of a lot of the money that goes to extreme as well as moderate Islamic groups, and people argue, experts argue that the Turks are themselves a funnel for these groups, but they really are--this money comes through Turkey and comes through Turkish missionaries. So I think that many of these rumors are true, but I think finally that they should not create the impression that if this Saudi money were to dry up, these groups would disappear. The capacity of Islamic groups of all specters of Islam in Central Asia for self financing is there, and most of the money that goes into Islamic activities, all activities that are funded by the groups themselves, and the drug trade provides a major unending channel of funding for their activities.

CHAIRMAN YOUNG: Thank you. I think we may have time for one more question. I don't see my fellow Commissioners leaping to the floor. Let me again extend you the offer we've extended to each of our panels. Our record will remain open for 7 days. If there's anything else that you'd like to share with us, we'd be delighted to receive it. We may have additional questions which we will submit to you. But let me take this opportunity again to thank you very much for this extremely helpful testimony. We appreciate it very much. And we will now take a two-minute break while the next panel assembles. Thank you.