October 17, 2001

MR PAUL: Mr. Chairman: It is an honor to have Secretary of State Colin Powell here to brief the committee on the progress of the war on terrorism. I strongly support the administration's efforts to seek out and punish those who attacked the United States on 9/11 and those who supported and assisted them. I fully recognize the difficult challenges inherent in this effort, and that no real solution will be easily attained. With that said, I must admit that several of the secretary's points have troubled me.

Secretary Powell has stated that "our fight does not end with the al-Qaida and the Taliban regime," going on to quote President Bush, that "our war begins with the al-Qaida, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated." Mr. Chairman, that is a tall order. Does this Administration really mean to undertake eradicating terrorism from every nation before we can declare victory? Every war must have an exit-strategy, a point where victory can be declared and our troops can be brought home. I fear that the objectives as defined are sufficiently vague as to prevent us from doing so in the foreseeable future. In fact, the secretary's statement suggests that once our immediate objectives -- ridding the world of the al-Qaida network and the Taliban government- are met, we intend to actually widen the war.

Because I am concerned about winning this war at the least possible cost in American life and treasure, I have introduced legislation to authorize the president to issue letters of marque and reprisal. This legislation would give the president a powerful tool to root out Osama bin Laden and his supporters. The legislation would allow the United States to narrow the retaliation to only the guilty parties, thus providing a political as well as military victory. It would also address the increasingly complex problem of asymmetrical warfare using a solution that had been employed successfully in the past against a similar threat. I am disappointed to see that this legislation has not been considered by Congress, and that the Administration has not yet expressed its support for this bill.

I am also concerned about the emerging nation-building component of our activities in Afghanistan. If, as it appears, our military action in Afghanistan is to benefit the Northern

Alliance opposition group, what assurances do we have that this group will not be every bit as unpopular as the Taliban, as press reporting suggests? Not long ago, it was the Taliban itself that was the recipient of U.S. military and financial support. Who is to say that Afghanistan might not benefit from a government managed by several tribal factions with a weak central government and little outside interference either by the U. S. or the UN? Some have suggested that a western-financed pipeline through Afghanistan can only take place with a strong and "stable" government in place- and that it is up to the U.S. government to ensure the success of what is in fact a private financial venture. Whatever the case, my colleagues in Congress and those in the administration openly talk of a years-long post-war UN presence in Afghanistan to "build institutions."

The problem with nation-building is simple: it does not work. From Bosnia to Kosovo to Somalia and points beyond, have we seen even one successful example of UN nation-building? Foreign nation-building results in repressive, unpopular regimes that are seen by the population as Western creations. As such they are inherently unstable, which itself leads to all the more oppression. Indeed, many of our problems in the Middle East began when the CIA placed the Shah in charge of Iran. It took 25 years before he was overthrown, but when it finally happened the full extent of Iranian resentment toward U.S. nation-building exploded into the headlines with the kidnaping of more than 50 American citizens. It is a lesson we seem to have forgotten.

Mr. Chairman, many Arabs believe we "saved" Saddam Hussein in the Gulf War in order to justify our continued presence there- to, in turn, keep Saudi Arabia and Kuwait "safe." In a recent interview, President George Bush's father, President Bush, told CBS that he did not regret not going after Saddam Hussein because "what would have happened if we'd done that is we would have been alone. We would have been an occupying power in an Arab land...And we would have seen something much worse than we have now, because we would have had the enmity of all the gulf." These are thoughtful words from the former president, however it appears to many that this is exactly what we have done. And the result has been as President Bush warned: we have earned the enmity of many on the Arab streets, who regard our military presence on what they consider sacred ground in Saudi Arabia as an open wound in the Middle East. Those who say our policies have somehow justified the attacks against us are terribly mistaken. It is a fact, however, that our policies have needlessly alienated millions in the Arab world.

Our interventionist policies have not only made enemies around the globe. Our own troops are spread so thin defending foreign peoples and foreign lands, that when a crisis hit our own shores we were forced to bring in foreign AWACs surveillance planes to defend our country. That, more than anything else, underscores the folly of our interventionist foreign policy: our own defense establishment is unable to protect our citizens because it is too busy defending foreign lands. We must focus our efforts on capturing and punishing those who committed this

outrageous act against the United States. Then, if we are to be truly safe, we need a national debate on our foreign policy; we need to look at interventionism and the enmity it produces. We need to return to the sadly long-lost policy of peaceful commerce and normal relations with all nations and entangling alliances with none.