



UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE

An independent institution established by Congress to strengthen the nation's capacity
to promote peaceful resolution to international conflicts

Richard Solomon **USIP Headquarters Groundbreaking Ceremony** **June 5, 2008**

Welcome!

Anybody who was around here at about five o'clock last night, when the storm tore down the overhead fly, might have doubted that the weather would be with us today – despite the heat. But it's clear that the good Lord and Mother Nature have decided to put their blessing on this very important day for the Institute of Peace.

We truly appreciate your joining us to celebrate what is a major step forward in realizing a noble, but daunting vision – the establishment of an institution dedicated, as our charter says, "to educating and training in the ways of furthering the national interest in the promotion of international peace."

Twenty-four years ago, when Congress established the United States Institute of Peace, the international environment hardly seemed propitious for peace making. The Cold War was still very cold. And given the character of the times, Congress held back in realizing the full aspiration of the Matsunaga Commission, which was to establish what was called a National Peace Academy, a four-year professional training institution that would parallel the educational missions of our national military academies.

But Congress did give the Institute of Peace a broad and flexible mission. In the words of our establishing legislation, it was a mandate to "promote international peace and the resolution of conflicts among the nations and peoples of the world without recourse to violence."

But then, within the first decade of the Institute's creation, as we all know today, the world experienced a major transformation. First, the Cold War ended. And of course, to humankind's relief it ended peacefully. Yet the 1990s, and the first years of the new century, were not a time of peace. That ever-present human capacity for conflict expressed itself in new and challenging ways: humanitarian crises, ethnic and religious extremism, terrorism, and the proliferation of highly destructive weaponry.

And for more than a quarter century now, the dedicated staff of the Institute of Peace – my colleagues who are seated or standing among you, and who will be asked to stand in recognition before the celebration is over – our staff, guided by our Congressional mandate, have developed approaches to conflict management that are helping our country cope with today's challenges to peace.

Our work is overseen by a bipartisan Board of Directors, nominated by the White House and confirmed by the Senate. And we have been most fortunate to have had a great series of chairmen – and woman: John Norton Moore; Elspeth Rostow, who most regretfully we lost not too long ago; and today, Robin West. They have directed the Institute's growth into a center of innovation in conflict management.

Our programs are designed, as we like to say, to "think, act, teach, and train" in the skills of peacebuilding. And our work today brings us closer to fulfilling that founding vision of a national institution dedicated to training professionals in the skills of non-violent conflict management.

The Institute's work was recognized by Congress in 2004, our twentieth anniversary year, when Senator Daniel Inouye generously referred to us as a "unique national treasure." Such a characterization for us evoked both a combination of pride in our progress, but frankly, humility at the expectations we were challenged to fulfill.

But with such congressional support, and with the generosity of the United States Navy, we were granted this spectacular and historic building site. Your program will give you some very interesting background history on Navy Hill, on Braddock's Rock, and the significance of this site.

Here we are, at the corner of the National Mall and within sight of the memorials to our great national sacrifices in war. The facility that will emerge from the excavation just behind me, and the two brick buildings beside us, will give permanence to the work of the Institute of Peace, and prominence to that hopeful, challenging vision of a national institution that can help our country better manage conflict by peaceful means.

But this challenge is also a great opportunity. As former Secretary of State George Schultz, who will be joining us shortly, has stressed, despite today's threats to global peace and security, we are at what might be characterized as a "golden moment" in world affairs – a time when, with security and vision, we can dramatically improve the lives of billions of people.

And thus, the positive perspective on the Institute's work is to help create the conditions that will enable all the positive trends of our time to flourish, to humankind's betterment. We are deeply committed to professionalizing the pursuit of peace, and our beautiful new building will be the headquarters of what will become a global network of professionals well trained in the skills of conflict management.

We are especially honored today to have our progress and our standing as a national institution recognized by the participation of the President of the United States and by our congressional creators and supporters, represented here on the podium by Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, who also will be joining us shortly, and the Majority Leader of the Senate Harry Reid.

As well, I want to recognize in our midst a number of distinguished public officials and supporters of our work. In the front row are former Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger, George Schultz, and Madeleine Albright, and Secretary of State Condoleezza; former secretaries of defense Robert McNamara and Frank Carlucci; National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley; and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen.

The Institute has done its work in over a hundred and twenty countries abroad, and we are pleased that a representative grouping of ambassadors from some of the countries we have worked with are here today: Ambassadors from China, Egypt, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, the Russian Federation, Singapore, Slovenia, and Sweden, and particularly, let me note the presence of the Foreign Minister of Sweden, His Excellency Carl Bildt.

Let me now turn the podium over to a member of the Institute's first Board of Directors, the Reverend Sidney Lovett. Sid is a retired minister of the United Church of Christ, and a two-term member of the New Hampshire state legislature. While on the Board Sid was the first clerk of the fundraising effort for the building project. I am pleased to recognize the Reverend Sidney Lovett.