S. HRG. 110–635

THE SITUATION IN IRAQ AND PROGRESS MADE BY THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAQ IN MEETING BENCHMARKS AND ACHIEVING RECONCILIATION

HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

APRIL 8, 9, AND 10, 2008

Printed for the use of the Committee on Armed Services

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

45–666 PDF WASHINGTON : 2008

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Internet: bookstore.gpo.gov Phone: toll free (866) 512–1800; DC area (202) 512–1800
Fax: (202) 512–2104 Mail: Stop IDCC, Washington, DC 20402–0001

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

CARL LEVIN, Michigan, *Chairman*

EDWARD M. KENNEDY, Massachusetts
ROBERT C. BYRD, West Virginia
JOSEPH I. LIEBERMAN, Connecticut
JACK REED, Rhode Island
DANIEL K. AKAKA, Hawaii
BILL NELSON, Florida
E. BENJAMIN NELSON, Nebraska
EVAN BAYH, Indiana
HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON, New York
MARK L. PRYOR, Arkansas
JIM WEBB, Virginia
CLAIRE McCASKILL, Missouri

JOHN McCAIN, Arizona
JOHN WARNER, Virginia,
JAMES M. INHOFE, Oklahoma
JEFF SESSIONS, Alabama
SUSAN M. COLLINS, Maine
SAXBY CHAMBLISS, Georgia
LINDSEY O. GRAHAM, South Carolina
ELIZABETH DOLE, North Carolina
JOHN CORNYN, Texas
JOHN THUNE, South Dakota
MEL MARTINEZ, Florida
ROGER F. WICKER, Mississippi

RICHARD D. DEBOBES, *Staff Director*
MICHAEL V. KOSTIW, *Republican Staff Director*

CONTENTS

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF WITNESSES

THE SITUATION IN IRAQ AND PROGRESS MADE BY THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAQ IN MEETING BENCHMARKS AND ACHIEVING RECONCILIATION

APRIL 8, 2008

	Page
Petraeus, GEN David H., USA, Commander, Multi-National Force-Iraq	7
Crocker, Ambassador Ryan C., United States Ambassador to Iraq	21

THE SITUATION IN IRAQ AND PROGRESS MADE BY THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAQ IN MEETING THE BENCHMARKS AND ACHIEVING RECONCILIATION

APRIL 9, 2008

Bacevich, Andrew J., Professor of International Relations and History, Boston University	95
Keane, GEN John M. USA (Ret.), Senior Managing Director, Keane Advisors, LLC	100
Malley, Robert, Middle East and North Africa Program Director, International Crisis Group	105

THE SITUATION IN IRAQ, PROGRESS MADE BY THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAQ IN MEETING BENCHMARKS AND ACHIEVING RECONCILIATION, THE FUTURE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN IRAQ, AND THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

APRIL 10, 2008

Gates, Hon. Robert M., Secretary of Defense	161
Mullen, Admiral Michael G., USN, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff	165

THE SITUATION IN IRAQ AND PROGRESS MADE BY THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAQ IN MEETING BENCHMARKS AND ACHIEVING RECONCILIATION

TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 2008

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:31 a.m. in room SD–106, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator Carl Levin (chairman) presiding.

Committee members present: Senators Levin, Kennedy, Lieberman, Reed, Akaka, Bill Nelson, E. Benjamin Nelson, Bayh, Clinton, Pryor, Webb, McCaskill, McCain, Warner, Inhofe, Sessions, Collins, Chambliss, Graham, Cornyn, Thune, Martinez, and Wicker.

Majority staff members present: Daniel J. Cox, Jr., professional staff member; Evelyn N. Farkas, professional staff member; Michael J. Kuiken, professional staff member; Thomas K. McConnell, professional staff member; Michael J. McCord, professional staff member; William G.P. Monahan, counsel; Michael J. Noblet, professional staff member; and William K. Sutey, professional staff member.

Minority staff members present: Michael V. Kostiw, Republican staff director; William M. Caniano, professional staff member; David G. Collins, research assistant; Paul C. Hutton IV, research assistant; Gregory T. Kiley, professional staff member; David M. Morriss, minority counsel; Lucian L. Niemeyer, professional staff member; Christopher J. Paul, professional staff member; Lynn F. Rusten, professional staff member; and Dana W. White, professional staff member.

Staff assistants present: Fletcher L. Cork, Ali Z. Pasha, and Brian F. Sebold.

Committee members' assistants present: Sharon L. Waxman and Jay Maroney, assistants to Senator Kennedy; Frederick M. Downey, assistant to Senator Lieberman; Elizabeth King, assistant to Senator Reed; Bonni Berge, assistant to Senator Akaka; Christopher Caple, assistant to Senator Bill Nelson; Andrew R. Vanlandingham, assistant to Senator Ben Nelson; Jon Davey, assistant to Senator Bayh; Andrew Shapiro, assistant to Senator Clinton; M. Bradford Foley, assistant to Senator Pryor; Gordon I. Peterson, assistant to Senator Webb; Stephen C. Hedger, assistant to Senator McCaskill; Richard H. Fontaine, Jr., assistant to Sen-

ator McCain; Sandra Luff, assistant to Senator Warner; Anthony J. Lazarski and Nathan Reese, assistants to Senator Inhofe; Todd Stiefler, assistant to Senator Sessions; Mark J. Winter, assistant to Senator Collins; Clyde A. Taylor IV, assistant to Senator Chambliss; Andrew King, assistant to Senator Graham; Lindsey Neas, assistant to Senator Dole; Brian Polley, assistant to Senator Cornyn; Jason Van Beek, assistant to Senator Thune; Brian W. Walsh, assistant to Senator Martinez; and Erskine W. Wells III, assistant to Senator Wicker.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CARL LEVIN, CHAIRMAN

Chairman LEVIN. Good morning, everybody.

First, let us welcome General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker, we thank you for joining us today. We thank you for your service to our Nation, and please express our deep gratitude to the men and women serving in Iraq, both in our Armed Forces, and the civilian agencies of our Government. We look forward to your report and recommendations as to where we go from here.

Until recent attacks on the Green Zone, heightened attacks on our forces, and violent events in Basrah and Baghdad, the surge, along with other factors, appeared to have achieved some success in reducing violence in Iraq.

This newly increased violence raises questions about the military success of the surge, but more significantly, the purpose of the surge as announced by President Bush last year, which was to give the Iraqi leaders breathing room to work out a settlement, has not been achieved. That reality lead many of us to, once again, challenge President Bush's policy.

During my recent trip to Iraq, just before the latest outbreak of violence, a senior U.S. military officer told me that he asked an Iraqi official, why is it that we're using our U.S. dollars to pay your people to clean up your town, instead of you using your funds? The Iraqi replied, "As long as you are willing to pay for the cleanup, why should we do it?"

This story crystallizes a fundamental problem of our policy in Iraq. It highlights the need to change our current course in order to shift responsibility from our troops and our taxpayers to the Iraqi Government, and force that government to take responsibility for their own future politically, economically, and militarily.

Our current open-ended commitment is an invitation to continuing dependency. An open-ended pause, starting in July, would be just the next page in a war plan with no exit strategy.

Another senior U.S. military officer in Iraq put it 2 weeks ago, it's time to take the training wheels off and it's time to take our hands off the Iraqi bicycle seat.

The Bush administration's strategy has been built on the assumption that, so long as we continue to provide the Maliki Government with plenty of time, military support, and financial assistance, they will take responsibility for Iraq and its people.

The major political steps that they need to take have not yet been taken by the Iraqis, including establishing a framework for controlling and sharing oil revenues, adapting an election law so that provincial elections can take place, and considering amendments to their constitution.

Even the few small political steps that have been taken by the Iraqis are in jeopardy because of the incompetence and obsessively sectarian leadership of Mr. Maliki.

Last week, this incompetence was dramatized in a military operation in Basrah. Far from being the defining moment that President Bush described, it was a haphazardly planned operation, carried out apparently without meaningful consultation with the U.S. military or even key Iraqi leaders, while Maliki made unrealistic claims, promises, and threats.

In January of last year, when President Bush announced the surge, he said the Iraqi Government planned to take responsibility for security across Iraq by the end of 2007. The President also pledged to hold the Iraqi Government to a number of other political benchmarks which were supposed to be achieved by the end of 2007. Instead of forcefully pressing for political progress, President Bush has failed to hold the Maliki Government to their promises, showering them instead with praise that they are bold and strong.

The President has ignored the view of his own military leaders. A State Department report less than 5 months ago included the quote, "the intransigence of Iraq's Shiite-dominated government is a key threat facing the United States' efforts in Iraq, rather than al Qaeda terrorists, Sunni insurgents, or Iranian-backed militia."

Now violence appears to be on the rise, and President Bush is once again taking pressure off of Maliki if he announces that reductions of our troops will be halted in July, and that the pause is open-ended.

On the economic side, 5 years after the war began, skyrocketing oil prices have swelled Iraqi oil revenues beyond all expectation. Iraq now has tens of billions of dollars in surplus funds in their banks, and in accounts around the world, including about $30 billion in U.S. banks.

The Iraqi leaders and bureaucrats aren't spending their funds. The result is, that far from financing its own reconstruction as the administration promised 5 years ago, the Iraqi Government has left the U.S. to make most of the capital expenditures needed to provide essential services and improve the quality of life of Iraqi citizens.

American taxpayers are spending vast sums on reconstruction efforts. For example, the U.S. has spent over $27 billion to date on major infrastructure projects, job training, education and training, and equipping of Iraqi security forces (ISFs).

On the other hand, according to the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, the Iraqi Government budgeted $6.2 billion for its capital budget in 2006, but spent less than a quarter of that. As of August 31, 2007, the Iraqi Government has spent somewhere between 4.4 percent, according to the Government Accountability Office, and 24 percent according to the White House, of its $10 billion capital budget for 2007.

As of last Thursday, the United States is paying the salaries of almost 100,000 Iraqis who are working on the reconstruction. To add insult to injury, in addition to spending tens of billions of U.S. dollars on reconstruction, American taxpayers are also paying $3 to $4 a gallon for gas here at home, much of which originates in the Middle East, including Iraq.

The Iraqi Government seems content to sit by, build up surpluses, and let Americans reconstruct their country and let Americans foot the bill. But the American people surely aren't content with that, and the Bush administration shouldn't be either.

Militarily, 5 years after the war began, the Iraqi Army now numbers 160,000 soldiers, over 60 percent of whom, according to our own statistics, are capable of taking the lead in operations carried out in conjunction with U.S. troops.

However, in 4 key Northern Provinces where the Iraqis have 50,000 trained soldiers, the United States forces number 20,000. We were told on our recent visit that from December 29, 2007 through March 16, 2008, there were 110 combined U.S.-Iraqi operations of a company size, or greater, and that the Iraqi Army led in just 10 of those 110 operations.

As the fighting in Basrah and Baghdad demonstrates, we are being drawn deeper into what General Raymond T. Odierno described here last week as an intercommunal conflict. That conflict, which has nothing to do with al Qaeda and everything to do with a civil war, appears to be brewing.

There is a consensus among the President's supporters and critics alike that there is no military solution to this conflict and there will be no end to it unless the Iraqi political leaders take responsibility for the country's future.

An announcement of an open-ended pause on troop reductions, starting in July, would simply send the wrong message to the Iraqi leaders. Rather, we need to put continuous and increasing pressure on the Iraqis to settle their political differences, to pay for their own reconstruction effort with their oil windfalls, and to take the lead in conducting military operations.

The way to do that is to adopt a reasonable timetable for a change in mission and redeployment of our troops. Gradually shifting responsibility to the Iraqis for their own future—politically, militarily, and economically—is our best hope for a successful outcome in Iraq and represents, finally, an exit strategy for most of our troops.

Senator McCain.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome back to our two distinguished witnesses.

We've come a long way since early 2007 and quite a distance, even, since General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker appeared before our committee last September. We owe these two patriotic Americans a debt of gratitude for their selfless service to our country.

At the beginning of last year, we were engaged in a great debate about what to do in Iraq. Four years of mismanaged war had brought us almost to the point of no return. Sectarian violence in Iraq was spiraling out of control, life had become a struggle for survival, and a full-scale civil war seemed almost unavoidable. Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) was on the offensive and entire Iraqi provinces were under the control of extremists.

Yet, rather than retreat from Iraq and face, thereby, the terrible consequences that would ensue, we chose to change strategies to

try to turn things around. Instead of abandoning Iraq to civil war, genocide, and terror, and the Middle East to the destabilizing effects of these consequences, we changed the strategy and sent additional troops to carry it out. By the time our two witnesses testified in September, it had become clear that these new efforts were succeeding.

Since the middle of last year, sectarian and ethnic violence, civilian deaths, and deaths of coalition forces have all fallen dramatically. This improved security environment has led to a new opportunity; one in which average Iraqis can, in the future, approach more normal political and economic life.

Reconciliation has moved forward, and over the weekend, Sunni, Shiite, and Kurdish leaders backed the Prime Minister in a statement supporting his operation in Basrah, and urging the disbandment of all militias.

Much, much more needs to be done, and Iraqi leaders need to know that we expect them to show the necessary leadership to rebuild their country, for only they can. But today, it is possible to talk with real hope and optimism about the future of Iraq and the outcome of our efforts there.

While the job of bringing security to Iraq is not finished, as the recent fighting in Basrah and elsewhere vividly demonstrated, we're no longer staring into the abyss of defeat and we can now look ahead to the genuine prospect of success.

Success: the establishment of a peaceful, stable, prosperous, democratic state that poses no threats to its neighbors and contributes to the defeat of terrorists, this success is within reach. With success, Iraqi forces will take responsibility for enforcing security in their country, and American troops can return home with the honor of having secured their country's interests at great personal cost, and of helping other people achieve peace and self-determination.

That's what I hope every American desires for our country and for our mission in Iraq. But should the United States, instead, choose to withdraw from Iraq before Iraq's security is established we will exchange for this victory a defeat that is terrible and longlasting.

AQI will claim victory, and increase its efforts to promote sectarian tensions, pushing for a full-scale civil war. It could descend into genocide and destabilize the Middle East. Iraq would become a failed state and it could become a haven for terrorists to train and plan their operations.

Iranian influence would increase substantially in Iraq, and Iran would encourage other countries to seek accommodation of Tehran at the expense of our interests.

An American failure would almost certainly require us to return to Iraq, or draw us into a wider, far, far costlier war.

On the other hand, when the Iraqis are able to build on the opportunity provided by recent successes, they will have a chance to leave in Iraq a force for stability and freedom, not conflict and chaos. In doing so, we will ensure that the terrible price we are paying in the war, a price that has made all of us sick at heart, has not been paid in vain.

Our troops can leave behind a successful mission, and our Nation can leave behind a country that contributes to the security of America and the world. To do this, we must continue to help the Iraqis protect themselves against the terrorists and the insurgents.

We must press ahead against al Qaeda, the radical Shiite militias, and the Iranian-backed special groups. We must continue to support the Sunni volunteers and the Iraqi Awakening as they stand up to AQI. We must continue to build the ISFs so they can play an ever-stronger and more neutral role in suppressing violence.

This means rejecting, as we did in 2007, calls for a reckless and irresponsible withdrawal of our forces at the moment when they are succeeding. I do not want to keep our troops in Iraq a minute longer than necessary to secure our interests there. Our hope, my hope, is an Iraq that no longer needs American troops, and I believe we can achieve that goal, perhaps sooner than many imagine. But I also believe the promise of withdrawal of our forces, regardless of the consequences, would constitute a failure of political and moral leadership.

Achieving our goals in Iraq will require much more than a military effort. Arab neighbors should increase their investment and engagement, including an overdue dispatch of ambassadors to Baghdad. We should encourage greater United Nations (U.N.) involvement, building on the work that representatives have done on Kirkuk recently.

Iraqis must continue the reconciliation that has helped dampen violence over recent months, and they need to move a portion of their budget surpluses into job creation programs, move toward an end to their reliance on outside sources of aid, and look for other ways to take on more of the financial burdens currently borne by American taxpayers.

This is especially important as the Government of Iraq continues to take in revenues it finds difficult to disburse through its own government channels. One way they begin to do this is by contributing significantly to the Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) which pays for the employment of reconstruction projects throughout the country. This is a start. Other programs of this type can and should be funded by the Iraqis themselves.

By giving our men and women in uniform the time and support necessary to succeed in Iraq, we have before us a hard road. It is a privilege beyond measure to live in a country served so well by these individuals. The sacrifices made by these patriots and their families are incredibly great, and the alternative path is, in the end, a far costlier one.

As we convene this hearing, and as we continue to debate our future in Iraq, Americans continue to risk everything to accomplish their mission on our behalf. Given the untold cost of a failure and the benefits offered by success, Congress must not choose to lose in Iraq. We should choose instead to succeed.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator McCain.

Again, a warm welcome to you, General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker.

General Petraeus, will you begin?

STATEMENT OF GEN DAVID H. PETRAEUS, USA, COMMANDER, MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE-IRAQ

General PETRAEUS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on the security situation in Iraq, and to discuss the recommendations that I recently provided to my chain of command.

Since Ambassador Crocker and I appeared before you 7 months ago, there has been significant, but uneven, security progress in Iraq. Since September, levels of violence and civilian deaths have been reduced substantially. AQI and other extremist elements have been dealt serious blows, the capabilities of ISF elements have grown, and there has been noteworthy involvement of local Iraqis and local security.

Nonetheless, the situation in certain areas is still unsatisfactory and innumerable challenges remain. Moreover, as events in the last 2 weeks have reminded us, and as I have repeatedly cautioned, the progress made since last spring is fragile and reversible.

Still, security in Iraq is better than it was when Ambassador Crocker and I reported to you last September, and it is significantly better than it was 15 months ago when Iraq was on the brink of civil war and the decision was made to deploy additional forces to Iraq.

A number of factors have contributed to the progress that has been made. First, of course, has been the impact of increased numbers of coalition and Iraqi forces. We're well aware of the U.S. surge, let us recognize that Iraqis also conducted a surge, adding well over 100,000 additional soldiers and police to the ranks of the security forces in 2007 and slowly increasing its capability to deploy and employ these forces.

The second factor has been the employment of coalition and Iraqi forces in the conduct of counterinsurgency operations across the country, deployed together to safeguard the Iraqi people, to pursue AQI, to combat criminal elements and militia extremists, to foster local reconciliation, and to enable political and economic progress.

Another important factor has been an attitudinal shift among certain elements of the Iraqi population. Since the first Sunni Awakening in late 2006, Sunni communities in Iraq increasingly have rejected AQI's indiscriminate violence and extremist ideology.

These communities also recognize that they cannot share in Iraq's bounty if they didn't participate in the political arena. Over time, awakenings have prompted tens of thousands of Iraqis, some former insurgents, to contribute to local security, the so-called Sons of Iraq. With their assistance and the relentless pursuit of AQI, the threat posed by AQI, while still lethal and substantial, has been reduced significantly.

The recent threat in Basrah, southern Iraq, and Baghdad underscored the importance of a ceasefire declared by Muqtada al-Sadr last fall, another factor in the overall reduction in violence.

Recently, some militia elements became active again, but an al-Sadr stand down did resolve the situation to a degree. The flare-up also highlighted the destructive role Iran has played in funding, training, arming, and directing the so-called Special Groups, and generated a renewed concern about Iran in the minds of many

Iraqi leaders. Unchecked, the Special Groups pose the greatest long-term threat to the viability of a democratic Iraq.

As we look to the future, our task together with our Iraqi partners will be to build on the progress achieved and to deal with the many challenges that remain. I do believe that we can do this while continuing the ongoing drawdown of the surge forces.

In September, I described the fundamental nature of the conflict in Iraq as a competition among ethnic and sectarian communities for power and resources. This competition continues, influenced heavily by outside actors. Resolution remains the key to producing long-term stability in Iraq.

Various elements push Iraq's ethno-sectarian competition toward violence. Terrorists, insurgents, militias, extremists, and criminal gangs pose a significant threat. Al Qaeda senior leaders who still view Iraq as the central front in their global strategy send funding, direction, and foreign fighters to Iraq.

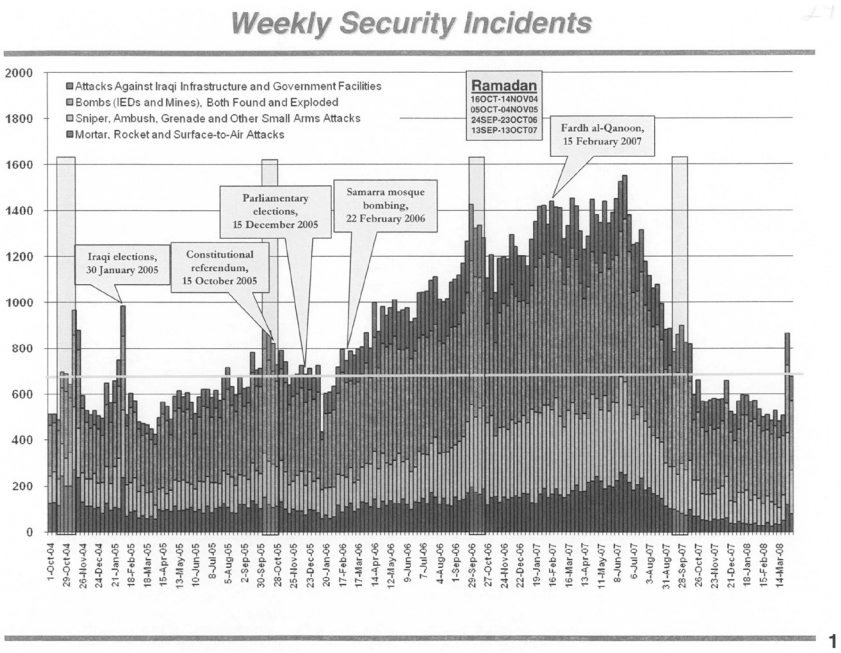
Actions by neighboring states compound Iraq's challenges. Syria has taken some steps to reduce the flow of foreign fighters from its territory, but not enough to shut down the key members of AQI. Iran has fueled violence, as I noted, in a particularly damaging way, through its lethal support for these Special Groups.

Finally, insufficient Iraqi governmental capacity, increased sectarian mistrust, and corruption add to Iraq's problems. These challenges and a recent week's violence notwithstanding, Iraq's ethno-sectarian competition in many areas is now taking place more as debate and less through violence.

In fact, the recent escalation of violence in Baghdad and Southern Iraq was dealt with, temporarily at least, by most parties acknowledging that the rational way ahead is through political dialogue, rather than street fighting.

As I stated at the outset, though Iraq remains a violent country, we do see progress in the sectarian arena. As this chart (slide 1) illustrates, for nearly 6 months, security incidents have been at a level not seen since early to mid-2005, though the level has spiked in recent weeks as a result of the fighting in Basrah and Baghdad.

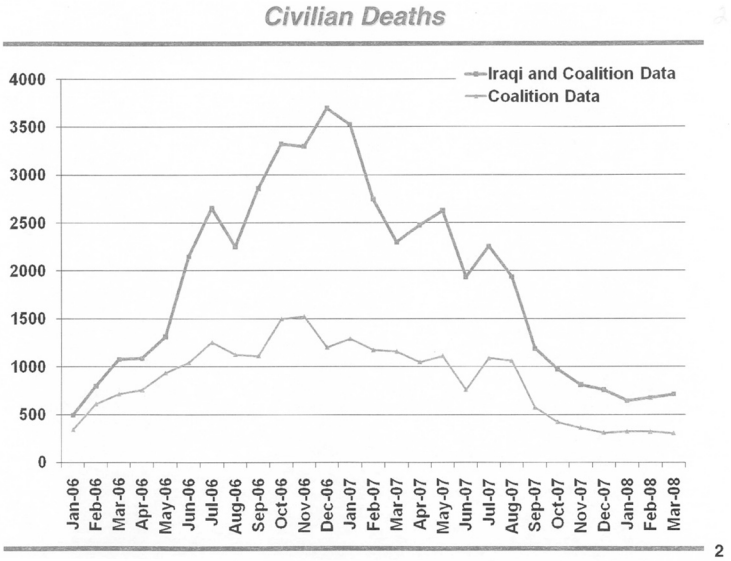
[The chart referred to follows:]



The level of incidents has already begun to turn down again, though the period ahead will be a sensitive one. As our primary mission is to help protect the population, we closely monitor the number of Iraqi civilians killed through the violence. As this chart (slide 2) reflects, civilian deaths have decreased over the past year to a level not seen since the early 2006 Samarra Mosque bombing that set off a cycle of sectarianism violence that tore apart the fabric of Iraqi society in 2006 and early 2007.

This chart (slide 2) also reflects our increasing use of Iraqi-provided reports, with the top line reflecting coalition and Iraqi data, and the bottom line reflecting coalition return data only.

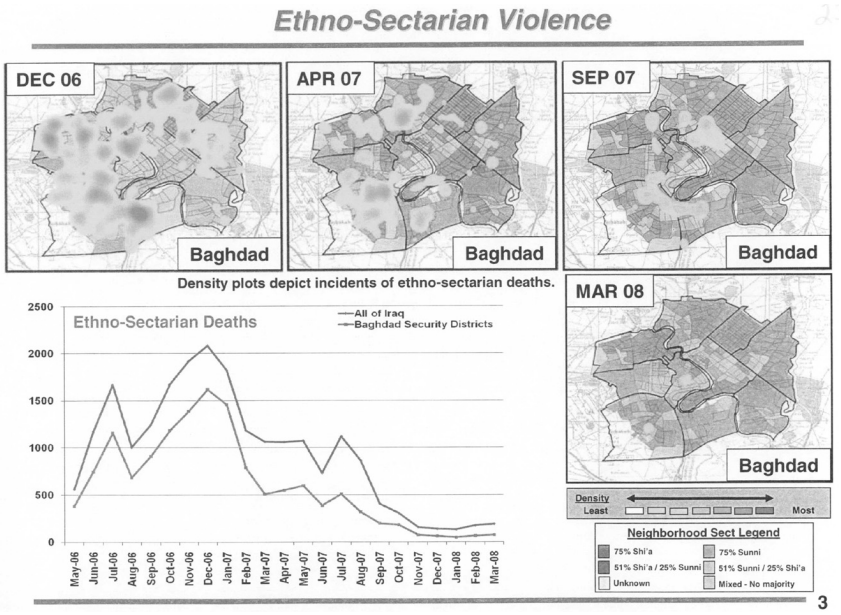
[The chart referred to follows:]



No matter which data is used, civilian deaths due to violence have been reduced significantly, but more clearly needs to be done.

Ethno-sectarian violence is a particular concern in Iraq as it is a cancer that continues to spread if left unchecked. As the box at the bottom left of this chart (slide 3) shows, the number of deaths from ethno-sectarian violence has fallen since we testified last September. A big factor has been a reduction of deaths by sectarian violence in Baghdad. Density blocks for this are shown in the box depicting Iraq's capital over time.

[The chart referred to follows:]

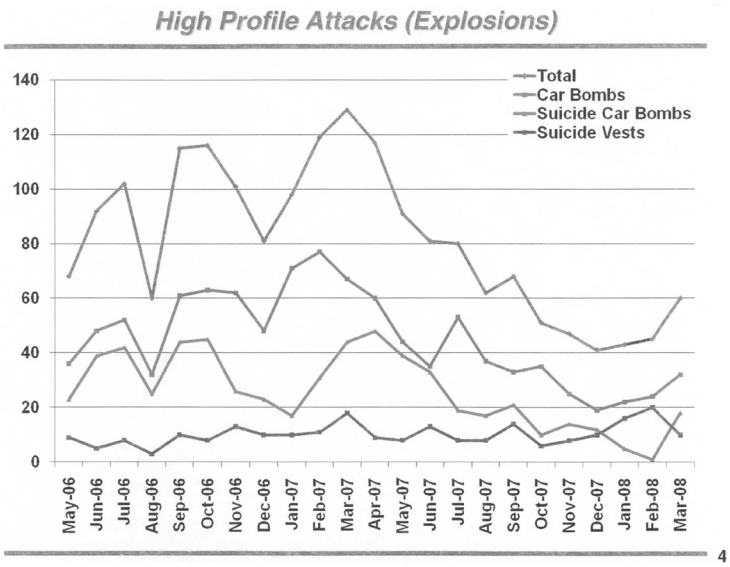


Some of this decrease is, to be sure, due to sectarian hardening of certain Baghdad neighborhoods. However, that is only a partial explanation, as countless sectarian fault lines and numerous mixed neighborhoods still exist in Baghdad and elsewhere.

In fact, coalition and Iraqi forces have off loaded along the fault line, to reduce the violence and enable Sunni and Shiite leaders to begin the long process of healing into their local communities.

As this next chart (slide 4) shows, even though the number of hard-core violent attacks increased in March as AQI lashed out, the current level of attacks like this remains far below its height a year ago. Moreover, as we have helped improve security and focused on enemy networks, we have seen a decrease in the effectiveness of such attacks.

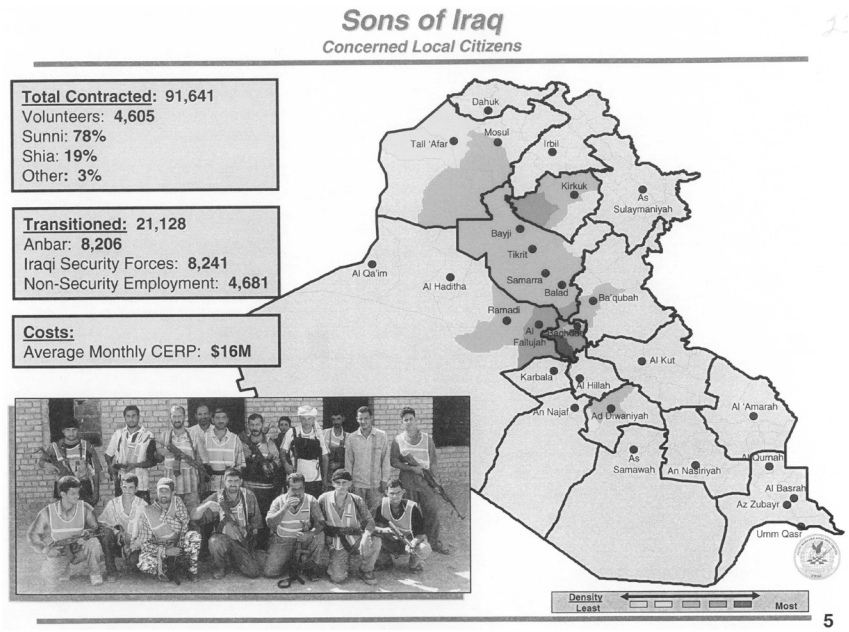
[The chart referred to follows:]



The number of deaths due to ethno-sectarian violence, in particular, remain relatively low, demonstrating the enemy's inability to reignite the cycle of ethno-sectarian violence.

The emergence of Iraqi volunteers to help secure their local communities has been an important element. As this chart (slide 5) depicts, there are now over 91,000 Sons of Iraq, Shiite as well as Sunni, under contract to help coalition and Iraqi forces protect their neighborhoods and secure infrastructure and roads.

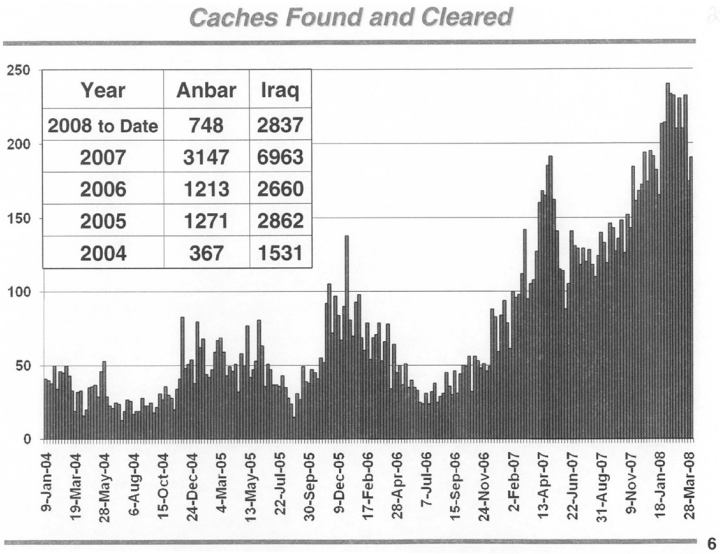
[The chart referred to follows:]



These volunteers have contributed significantly in the savings of vehicles not lost because of reduced violence, not to mention the priceless lives saved, that far outweigh the costs of the Iraqi contracts.

The Sons of Iraq have also contributed to the discovery of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and weapons in explosive caches. As this next chart (slide 6) shows, we have already found more caches in 2008 than we found in all of 2006.

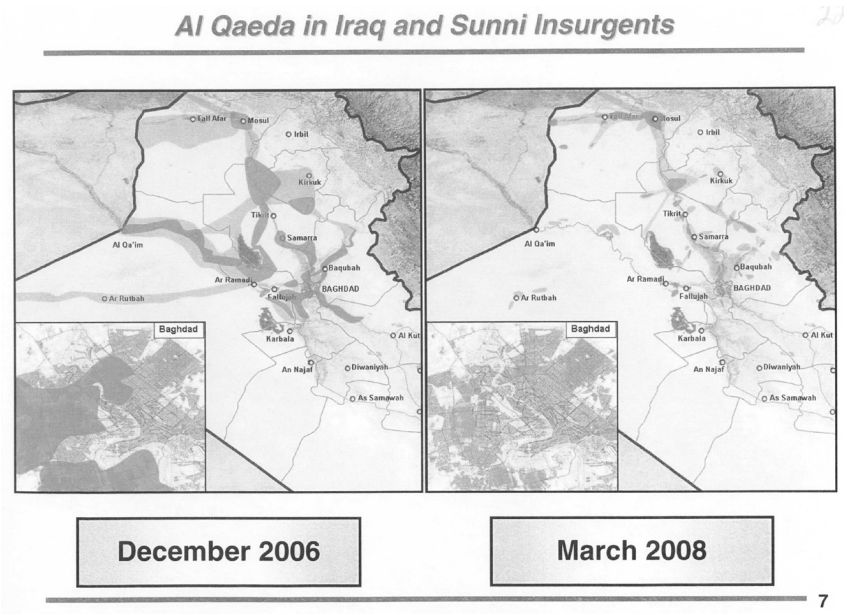
[The chart referred to follows:]



Given the importance of the Sons of Iraq, we're working closely with the Iraqi Government to transition the ISFs into other forms of employment, and over 21,000 have already been accepted into the police force or other government jobs. This process has been slow, but it is taking place, and we will continue to monitor it carefully.

Al Qaeda also recognizes the significance of the Sons of Iraq, and they rely on this to target it and reveal it. However, these attacks, in addition to widespread use of women, children, and the handicapped as suicide bombers, have further alienated AQI from the Iraqi people. The tenacious pursuit of AQI, together with AQI's loss of global support in many areas, has substantially reduced its capability, numbers, and freedom of movement. This chart (slide 7) displays the key military effect of the effort against AQI, and its insurgent allies. As you can see, we've reduced considerably the areas in which al Qaeda enjoys support and sanctuary, but clearly there is more to be done.

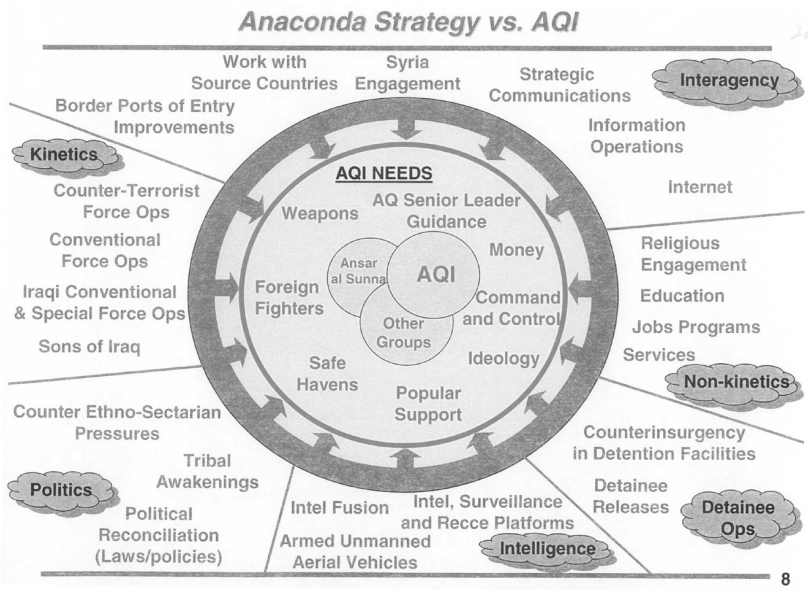
[The chart referred to follows:]



Having noted that progress, al Qaeda is still capable of lethal attacks, and we must maintain relentless pressure on the organization, on the networks outside Iraq that support it, and on the resource flows that sustain it.

This chart (slide 8) lays out a comprehensive strategy that we, the Iraqis, and our interagency and international partners are employing to reduce what AQI needs. As you can see, defeating AQI requires not just actions by our elite counterterrorist forces, but also major operations by coalition and Iraqi conventional forces, a sophisticated intelligence effort, political reconciliation, economic and social programs, information operations initiatives, diplomatic activity, the employment counterinsurgency principles and detainee operations, and many other actions.

[The chart referred to follows:]



Related to this effort, I applaud Congress's support for additional intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets in the upcoming supplemental, as ISR is vital to the success of our operations in Iraq and elsewhere.

As we combat AQI, we must remember that doing so not only reduces a major source of instability in Iraq, it also weakens an organization that al Qaeda's senior leaders view as a pool to spread its influence, and forment regional instability.

Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri have consistently advocated exploiting the situation in Iraq, and we have also seen AQI involved in destabilizing activities in the wider Mid-East Region.

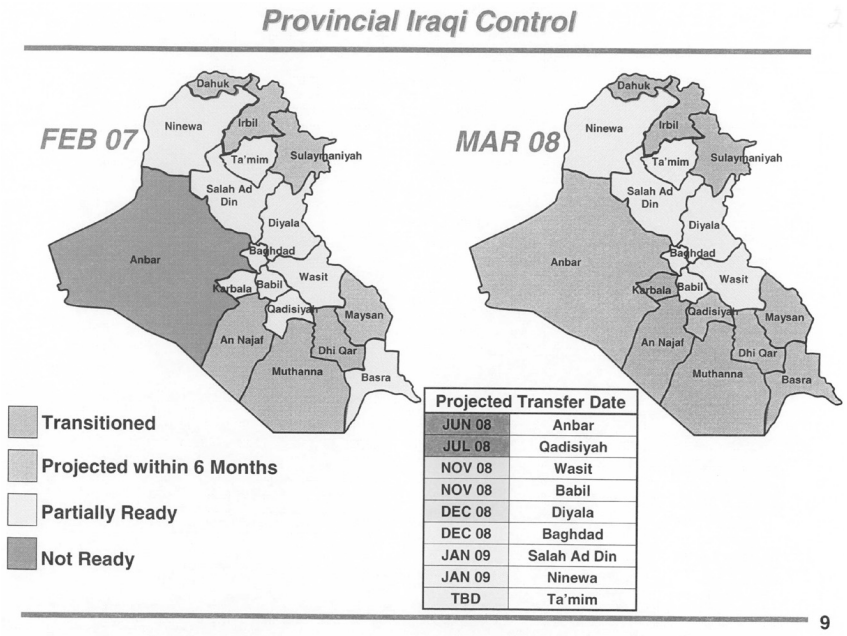
Together with the ISFs, we have also focused on the Special Groups. These elements are funded, trained, armed, and directed by Iran's Quds Force, with help from Lebanese Hezbollah. It was these groups that launched Iranian rockets and mortar rounds at Iraq's seat of government 2 weeks ago, causing loss of innocent life and fear in the capital, and requiring Iraqi and coalition actions in response.

Iraqi and coalition leaders have repeatedly noted their desire that Iran live up to the promises made by President Ahmadinejad and other senior Iranian leaders to stop their support for the Special Groups. However, nefarious activities by the Quds Force have continued, and Iraqi leaders now clearly recognize the threat they pose to Iraq. We should all watch Iranian actions closely in the weeks and months ahead, as they will show the kind of relationship Iran wishes to have with its neighbor, and the character of future Iranian involvement in Iraq.

The ISFs have continued to develop since September, and we have transferred responsibilities to Iraqi forces as their capabilities and conditions on the ground have permitted.

Currently, as this chart (slide 9) shows, half of Iraq's 18 provinces are under provincial Iraqi control. Many of these provinces, not just the successful ones in the Kurdish regional government area, but also a number of Southern Provinces have done well.

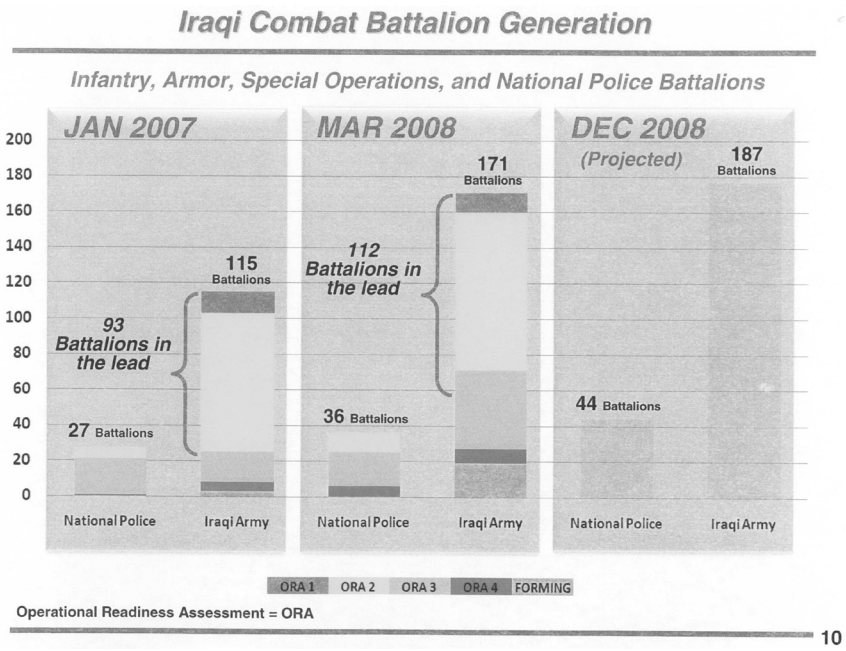
[The chart referred to follows:]



Challenges have emerged in some other areas, including, of course, Basrah. Nonetheless, this process will continue, and we expect Anbar and Qadisiyyah Provinces to transition in the months ahead.

Iraqi forces have grown significantly since September, and over 540,000 individuals now serve in the ISFs. The number of combat battalions capable of taking the lead in operations, albeit with some coalition support, has grown to well over 100 (slide 10). These units are bearing an increasing share of the burden, as evidenced by the fact that ISF losses have recently been three times our own. We will, of course, conduct careful after-action reviews with our Iraqi partners in the wake of recent operations, as there were units and leaders found wanting in some cases, and some of our assessments may be downgraded as a result.

[The chart referred to follows:]

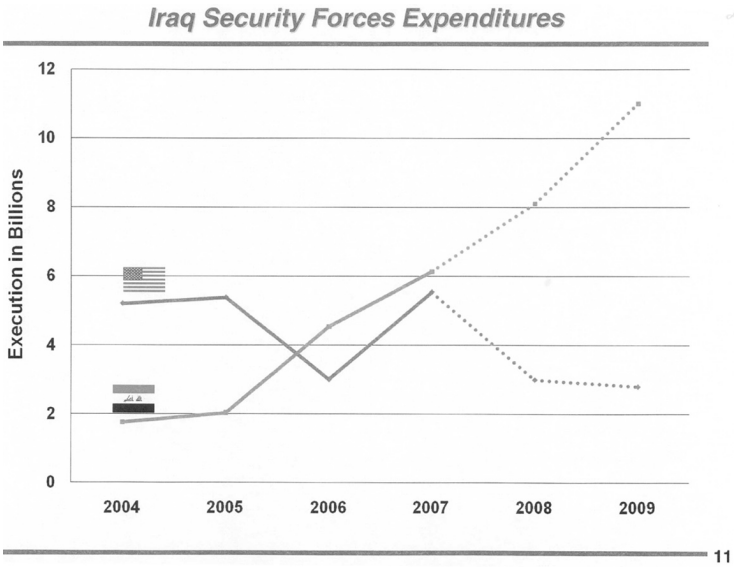


Nonetheless, the performance of many units was solid, especially once they got their footing, and gained a degree of confidence and certain Iraqi elements proved quite capable.

Underpinning the advances of the past year has been improvements in Iraq's security institutions. An increasingly robust Iraqi-run training base enabled the ISFs to grow by over 133,000 soldiers and police over the past 16 months, and the still-expanding training base is expected to generate an additional 50,000 Iraqi soldiers and 16 Army and Special Operations Battalions through the rest of 2008, along with 23,000 police and 9 National Police Battalions.

Additionally, Iraq's security ministries are steadily improving their ability to execute their budgets. As this chart (slide 11) shows, in 2007, as in 2006, Iraq's Security Ministry spent more on their forces than the United States provided through the ISF Fund (ISFF). We anticipate that Iraq will spend over $8 billion on security this year, and $11 billion next year. This projection enabled us recently to reduce significantly our ISFF request for fiscal year 2009 from $5.1 billion to $2.8 billion.

[The chart referred to follows:]



While improved, ISFs are not yet ready to defend Iraq or maintain security throughout the country on their own. Recent operations in Basrah highlighted improvements in the ability of the ISFs to deploy substantial numbers of units, supplies, and replacements on very short notice. They certainly could not have deployed a division's-worth of army and police units on such short notice a year ago.

On the other hand, the recent operations also underscored the considerable work still to be done in the area of logistics, force enablers, staff development, and command and control.

We also continue to help Iraq through the U.S. Foreign Military Sales (FMS) Program. As of March 2008, the Iraqi Government has purchased over $2 billion worth of equipment and services of American origin through FMS. Since September, and with your encouragement of the organizations and the FMS process, delivery has improved as the FMS system has strived to support urgent wartime requirements.

On a related note, I would ask that Congress consider restoring funding for the International Military Education and Training Program, which supports education for mid- and senior-level Iraqi military and civilian leaders, and is an important component of the development of the leaders Iraq will need in the future.

While security has improved in many areas, and the ISFs are shouldering more of the load, the situation in Iraq remains exceedingly complex and challenging. Iraq can face a resurgence of AQI, or additional Shiite groups could violate Muqtada al-Sadr's ceasefire order, and return to violence.

External actors, like Iran, could stoke violence within Iraq, and actions by other neighbors could undermine the security situation, as well.

Other challenges result, paradoxically, from improved security which has provided opportunities for political and economic progress, and improved services at the local, provincial, and national levels.

But the improvements have also created expectations that progress will continue. In the coming months, Iraq's leaders must strengthen governmental capacity, execute budgets, pass additional legislation, conduct provincial elections, carry out a census, determine the status of disputed territories, and resettle internally displaced persons and refugees. These tasks would challenge any government, much less a still-developing government, tested by war.

The CERP, the State Department's Quick Response Fund, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) programs enable us to help Iraq deal with its challenges.

To that end, I respectfully ask that you provide us, by June, the additional CERP funds requested in the supplemental. These funds have an enormous impact. As I noted earlier, the salaries paid to the Sons of Iraq alone cost far less than the cost savings in vehicles not lost due to the enhanced security in local communities.

Encouragingly, the Iraqi Government recently allocated $300 million for us to manage as Iraqi CERP, to perform projects for their people, while building their own capacity to do so.

The Iraqi Government has also committed $163 million to gradually assume Sons of Iraq contracts, $510 million for small business loans, and $196 million for a joint training, education, and reintegration program.

The Iraqi Government pledges to provide more as they execute the budget passed 2 months ago. Nonetheless, it is hugely important to have our resources continue, even as Iraqi funding begins to outstrip ours.

Last month, I provided my chain-of-command recommendations for the way ahead in Iraq. During that process, I noted the objective of retaining and building on our hard-fought security gains, while we draw down to the pre-surge level of 15 brigade combat teams. I emphasized the need to continue work with our Iraqi partners to secure the population, and to transition responsibilities to the Iraqis as quickly as conditions permit, but without jeopardizing the security gains that have been made.

As in September, my recommendations are informed by operational and strategic considerations. The operational considerations include recognition that the military surge has achieved progress, but that that progress is reversible. ISFs have strengthened their capability, but still must grow further. The provincial elections in the fall, refugee returns, detainee releases, and efforts to resolve provisional boundary disputes and Article 140 issues will be very challenging.

The transition of Sons of Iraq into ISFs or other pursuits will require time and careful monitoring. Withdrawing too many forces too quickly could jeopardize the progress of the past year, and performing the necessary tasks in Iraq will require sizable conventional forces, as well as Special Operations Forces and advisor teams.

The strategic considerations include recognition that the strain on the U.S. military, especially on its ground forces, has been con-

siderable. A number of security challenges inside Iraq are also related to significant regional and global threats.

A failed state in Iraq would pose serious consequences for the greater fight against al Qaeda, for regional stability, for the already existing humanitarian crisis in Iraq, and for the efforts to counter-malign Iranian influence.

After weighing these factors, I recommended to my chain of command that we continue the drawdown of the surge combat forces, and that upon the withdrawal of the last surge brigade combat team in July, we undertake a 45-day period of consolidation and evaluation. At the end of that period, we will commence a process of assessment to examine the conditions on the ground, and over time, determine when we can make recommendations for further reductions.

This process will be continuous, with recommendations for further reductions made as conditions permit. This approach does not allow establishment of a set withdrawal timetable, however, it does provide the flexibility those of us on the ground need to preserve the still-fragile security gains our troopers have fought so hard, and sacrificed so much, to achieve.

With this approach, the security achievements of 2007 and early 2008 can form a foundation for the gradual establishment of sustainable security in Iraq. This is not only important to the 27 million citizens of Iraq, it is also vitally important to those in the Gulf Region, to the citizens of the United States, and to the global community. It clearly is in our national interest to help Iraq prevent the resurgence of al Qaeda in the heart of the Arab world, to help Iraq resist Iranian encroachment on its sovereignty, to avoid renewed ethno-sectarian violence that could spill over Iraq's borders and make the existing refugee crisis even worse, and to enable Iraq to expand its role in the regional and global economies.

In closing, I want to comment briefly on those serving our Nation in Iraq. We have asked a great deal of them and of their families, and they have made enormous sacrifices. My keen personal awareness of the strain on them, and on the force as a whole, has been an important factor in my recommendations. Congress, the executive branch, and our fellow citizens have done an enormous amount to support our troopers and their loved ones, and all of us are grateful for that. Nothing means more to those in harms' way than the knowledge that their country appreciates their sacrifices and those of their families.

Indeed, all Americans should take great pride in the men and women serving our Nation in Iraq, and in the courage, determination, resilience, and initiative they demonstrate each and every day. It remains the greatest of honors to soldier with them.

Thank you very much.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, General Petraeus.

Ambassador Crocker?

STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR RYAN C. CROCKER, UNITED STATES AMBASSADOR TO IRAQ

Ambassador CROCKER. Mr. Chairman, Senator McCain, members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today to pro-

vide my assessment on political, economic, and diplomatic developments in Iraq.

When General Petraeus and I reported to you in September, I gave my considered judgment on whether our goals in Iraq were attainable. Can Iraq develop into a united, stable country with a democratically-elected government operating under the rule of law?

Last September, I said that the cumulative trajectory of political, economic, and diplomatic developments in Iraq was upwards, although the slope of that line was not steep. Developments over the last 7 months have strengthened my sense of a positive trend. Immense challenges remain and progress is uneven, and often frustratingly slow, but there is progress.

Sustaining that progress will require continuing U.S. resolve and commitment. What has been achieved is substantial, but it is also reversible.

Five years ago, the statue of Saddam Hussein was toppled in Baghdad. The euphoria of that moment evaporated long ago, but as Iraq emerges from the shattering violence of 2006 and the early part of 2007, there is reason to sustain that commitment and the enormous investment we have made in the lives of our young men and women and our resources.

Let me describe the developments upon which I base such a judgment.

The first is at the national level, in the form of legislation and the development of Iraq's parliament. In September, we were disappointed that Iraq had not yet completed key laws. In the last several months, Iraq's parliament has formulated, debated vigorously, and in many cases, passed legislation dealing with vital issues of reconciliation and nation-building.

A pension law extended benefits to individuals who had been denied them because of service with the previous regime. The accountability and Justice Law, de-Baathification reform, passed after lengthy and often contentious debate, reflects a strengthened spirit of reconciliation, as does a far-reaching amnesty law.

The Provincial Powers Law is a major step forward in defining the relationship between the Federal and Provincial Governments. This involved a debate about the fundamental nature of the State, similar in its complexity to our own lengthy and difficult debate over States' rights.

The Provincial Powers Law also called for provincial elections by October 1, 2008, and an electoral law is now under discussion that will set the parameter for those elections. All major parties have announced their support for elections, which will be a major step forward in Iraq's political development, and will set the stage for national elections in late 2009.

A vote by the Council of Representatives in January to change the design of the Iraqi flag, means the flag now flies in all parts of the country for the first time in years. The passage of the 2008 budget, with record amounts for capital expenditures ensures that the Federal and Provincial Governments will have the resources for public spending.

All of this has been done since September. These laws are not perfect and much depends on their implementation, but they are important steps.

Also important has been the development of Iraq's Council of Representatives (COR) as a national institution. Last summer, the parliament suffered from persistent and often paralyzing disputes over leadership and procedures. Now, it is successfully grappling with complex issues and producing viable tradeoffs and compromise packages.

As debates in Iraq's parliament become more about how to resolve tough problems in a practical way, Iraqi politics have become more fluid. Those politics still have a sectarian bent and basis, but coalitions have formed around issues, and sectarian political groupings, which often were barriers to progress, have become more flexible.

Let me also talk about the intangibles; attitudes among the Iraqi people. In 2006 and 2007, many understandably questioned whether hatred between Iraqis of different sectarian backgrounds was so deep that a civil war was inevitable. The Sunni Awakening Movement in Anbar, which so courageously confronted al Qaeda, continues to help keep the peace in the area, and keep al Qaeda out.

Fallujah, once a symbol for violence and terror, is now one of Iraq's safest cities. The Shiite holy cities of Najaf and Karbala are enjoying security and growing prosperity in the wake of popular rejection of extremist militia activity. The Shiite clerical leadership, the Marja'iyyah, based in Najaf, has played a quiet, but important, role in support of moderation and reconciliation.

In Baghdad, we can see that Iraqis are not pitted against each other purely on the basis of sectarian affiliation. The security improvements of the past months have diminished the atmosphere of suspicion and allowed for acts of humanity that transcend sectarian identities.

When I arrived in Baghdad a year ago, my first visit to a city district was to the predominantly Sunni area of Dora. Surge forces were just moving into neighborhoods still gripped by al Qaeda. Residents were also terrorized by extremist Shiite militias.

Less than a year later, at the end of February, tens of thousands of Shiite pilgrims walked through those same streets on the way to Karbala to commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussein. Sunni residents offered food and water as they passed through, and some joined the pilgrimage.

News from Iraq in recent weeks has been dominated by the situation in Basrah. Taken as a snapshot, the scenes of increasing violence and masked gunmen in the streets, it is hard to see how the situation supports a narrative of progress in Iraq, and there is still very much to be done to bring full government control to the streets of Basrah and eliminate entrenched extremist, criminal, and militia groups.

But when viewed with a broader lens, the Iraqi decision to take on these groups in Basrah has major significance. First, a Shiite majority government, led by Prime Minister Maliki, has demonstrated its commitment to taking on criminals and extremists, regardless of identity.

Second, ISFs led these operations in Basrah, and in towns and cities throughout the south. British and U.S. elements played important roles, but these were supporting roles, as they should be.

The operation in Basrah has also shaken up Iraqi politics. The Prime Minister returned to Baghdad from Basrah shortly before General Petraeus and I left for Washington, and he, confident in his decision, was determined to press the fight against illegal groups. But he is also determined to take a hard look at lessons learned.

The efforts of the government against extremist militia elements have broad political support, as a statement April 5 by virtually all of Iraq's main political leaders—Sunni, Shiite, and Kurd—made clear, in support of Prime Minister Maliki's Government.

A wild card remains the Sadrist Trend, and whether the Iraqis can continue to drive a wedge between other elements of the Trend and Iranian-supported Special Groups. A dangerous development in the immediate wake of the Basrah operation was what appeared to be a reunification between Special Groups and mainline Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM). We also saw a potential collapse of the JAM freeze in military operations.

As the situation unfolded, however, Muqtada al-Sadr issued a statement that disavowed anyone possessing heavy weapons, which would include the signature weapons of the Special Groups. This statement can further sharpen the distinction between members of the Sadrist Trend, who should not pose a threat to the Iraqi state, and members of the Special Groups, who very much do.

One conclusion I draw from these signs of progress is that the strategy that began with the surge is working. This does not mean that U.S. support should be open-ended, or that the level and nature of our engagement should not diminish over time. It is in this context that we have begun negotiating a bilateral relationship between Iraq and the United States.

In August, Iraq's five principal leaders requested a long-term relationship with the United States, to include economic, political, diplomatic, and security cooperation. The heart of this relationship will be a legal framework for the presence of American troops, similar to that which exists in nearly 80 countries around the world.

The Iraqis view the negotiation of this framework as a strong affirmation of Iraqi sovereignty, placing Iraq on par with other U.S. allies and removing the stigma of Chapter 7 status under the U.N. charter, pursuant to which coalition forces presently operate.

Such an agreement is in Iraq's interest and ours. U.S. Forces will remain in Iraq beyond December 31, 2008, when the U.N. resolution presently governing their presence expires. Our troops will need basic authorizations and protections to continue operations, and this agreement will provide those authorizations and protections.

The agreement will not establish permanent bases in Iraq, and we anticipate that it will expressly foreswear them. The agreement will not specify troop levels, and it will not tie the hands of the next administration. Our aim is to ensure that the next President arrives in office with a stable foundation upon which to base policy decisions, and that is precisely what this agreement will do. Congress will remain fully informed as these negotiations proceed in the coming weeks and months.

Mr. Chairman, significant challenges remain in Iraq. A reinvigorated cabinet is necessary, both for political balance and to improve the delivery of services to Iraq's people. Challenges to the rule of law, especially corruption, are enormous. Disputed internal boundaries, the Article 140 process, must be resolved. The return of refugees and the internally displaced must be managed. The rights of women and minorities must be better protected. Iraqis are aware of the challenges they face, and are working on them.

Iraq's political progress will not be linear. Developments which are, on the whole, positive, can still have unanticipated or destabilizing consequences. The decision to hold provincial elections, vital for Iraq's democratic development and long-term stability, will also produce new strains. Some of the violence we have seen recently in Southern Iraq reflects changing dynamics within the Shiite community as the political and security context changes. Such inflection points underscore the fragility of the situation in Iraq, but it would be wrong to conclude that any eruption of violence marks the beginning of an inevitable backslide.

In terms of economics and capacity-building, in September, I reported to you that there had been some gains in Iraq's economy and in the country's efforts to build capacity to translate these gains into more effective governance and services. Iraqis have built on these gains over the past month, as is most evident in the revival of marketplaces across Iraq, and the reopening of long-shuttered businesses.

According to a Center for International Private Enterprise poll last month, 78 percent of Iraqi business owners surveyed expect the Iraqi economy to grow significantly in the next 2 years.

With improving security and rising government expenditures, the International Monetary Fund projects that Iraq's gross domestic product will grow 7 percent in real terms this year, and inflation has been tamed. The dinar remains strong, and the Central Bank has begun to bring down interest rates.

Iraq's 2008 budget has allocated $13 billion for reconstruction, and a $5 billion supplemental budget this summer will further invest export revenues in building the infrastructure and providing the services that Iraq so badly needs.

This spending also benefits the United States. Iraq recently announced its decision to purchase 40 commercial aircraft from the U.S. at an estimated cost of $5 billion. As Iraq is now earning the financial resources it needs for bricks and mortar construction through oil production and export, our assistance has shifted to capacity development and an emphasis on local and post-kinetic development through our network of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and ministerial advisors.

The era of U.S.-funded major infrastructure projects is over. We are seeking to ensure that our assistance, in partnership with the Iraqis leverages Iraq's own resources. Our 25 PRTs throughout Iraq have been working to improve provincial and local governance capabilities, particularly in budget design and execution. They are also helping to establish critical linkages between provincial and Federal Governments. Our PRTs are great enablers, and we are working to ensure their continued viability as our forces redeploy. The relatively small amounts that they disburse through Quick Re-

sponse Funds have major impacts on local communities, and congressional support is important, as it is for other vital programs in the fiscal year 2008 global war on terrorism supplemental request.

Iraq increasingly is using its own resources to support projects and programs that we have developed. It has committed approximately $200 million in support of a program to provide vocational training for Concerned Local Citizens who stood up with us in the Awakening.

Our technical assistance advisors have helped design new procurement procedures for Iraq's Oil Ministry. We developed the technical specifications from which Iraq's State-owned oil company will build new oil export platforms and underwater pipelines worth over $1 billion.

In Baghdad, in the last 3 months, the municipality has stepped up to take over labor contracts worth $100 million that we had been covering under the Community Stabilization Program to clean the street.

Like so much else, Iraq's economy is fragile, the gains reversible, and the challenges ahead, substantial. Iraq will need to continue to improve governmental capacity past national level, improve hydrocarbon legislation, improve electrical production and distribution, improve the climate for foreign and domestic investment, create short- and long-term jobs, and tackle the structural and economic problems of the vital agricultural sector. We will be helping the Iraqis as they tackle this challenging agenda, along with other international partners including the U.N. and the World Bank.

In terms of regional and international dynamics, Mr. Chairman, along with the security surge last year, we also launched a diplomatic surge focused on enhancing U.N. engagement in Iraq, anchoring the international compact with Iraq, and establishing an expanded neighbors process which serves as a contract group in support of Iraq.

The U.N. has taken advantage of an expanded mandate granted to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) to increase the scope of its activities and the size of its staff. Under dynamic new leadership, UNAMI is playing a key role in preparing for provincial elections, and in providing technical assistance to resolve disputed internal boundaries. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has returned international staff to Iraq to assist with the return of internally displaced persons and refugees. The international compact with Iraq provides a 5-year framework for Iraq to reform its economy and achieve economic self-sufficiency in exchange for long-overdue Saddam-era debt relief. Preparations are underway for a ministerial-level compact meeting in Sweden next month; 74 nations were represented at last year's gathering in Egypt.

Iraq's neighbors also understand they have a major interest in Iraq's future. Turkey hosted the second ministerial meeting of Iraq's neighbors in November, and Kuwait will host the third meeting later this month. In addition to all of Iraq's neighbors, these expanded Neighbor's Conferences also include the permanent five members of the Security Council, the Arab League, and the G–8.

Support from Arab capitals has not been strong, and must improve for the sake of Iraq and the sake of the region. Bahrain's re-

cent announcement that it will return an Ambassador to Baghdad is welcome, and other Arab States should follow suit. Iraq is a multi-ethnic state, but it is also a founding member of the Arab League and an integral part of the Arab world. Last month, Iraq hosted a meeting of the Arab Parliamentary Union, bringing the leaders of Arab parliaments and consultative councils to Iraq for the first major inter-Arab gathering since 1990. It was noteworthy that the meeting was held in the Kurdish city of Irbil, under the recently redesigned Iraqi flag, highlighting both the remarkable prosperity and stability of Iraq's Kurdish region and the presence of the Iraqi Federal State.

We hope that this event will encourage more active Arab engagements with Iraq, and we expect Prime Minister Maliki's effort against extremist Shiite militias in Basrah will receive Arab support.

The presence of the Kurdistan Workers Party terrorist organization in the remote mountains of Iraq along the Turkish border has produced tension between Turkey and Iraq, and led to a Turkish cross-border operation in February, including movement of Turkish ground forces into Iraq.

At the same time, both governments are working to strengthen their ties, and Iraqi President Talabani made a successful visit to Turkey in March.

Syria plays an ambivalent role. We have seen evidence of efforts to interdict some foreign fighters seeking to transit Syria to Iraq, but others continue to cross the border. Syria also harbors individuals who finance and support the Iraqis insurgency. Iran continues to undermine the efforts of the Iraqi Government to establish a stable, secure state through the training of criminal militia elements engaged in violence against ISFs, coalition forces, and Iraqi civilians.

The extent of Iran's malign influence was dramatically demonstrated when militia elements—armed and trained by Iran—clashed with Iraqi Government forces in Basrah and Baghdad. When the President announced the surge, he pledged to seek and destroy Iranian-supported lethal networks inside Iraq. We know more about those networks, and their Quds Force sponsors than ever before, and we will continue to aggressively uproot and destroy them.

At the same time, we support constructive relations between Iran and Iraq and are participating in a tripartite process to discuss the security situation in Iraq. Iran has a choice to make.

Looking ahead, Mr. Chairman, almost everything about Iraq is hard. It will continue to be hard as Iraqis struggle with the damage and trauma inflicted by 35 years of totalitarian Baathist rule. But hard does not mean hopeless, and the political and economic progress of the past few months is significant.

These gains are fragile, however, and they are reversible. Americans have invested a great deal in Iraq, in blood as well as treasure, and they have the right to ask whether this is worth it, whether it is now time to walk away and let the Iraqis fend for themselves. Iraq has the potential to develop into a stable, secure, multi-ethnic, multi-sectarian democracy under the rule of law.

Whether it realizes that potential is ultimately up to the Iraqi people. Our support, however, will continue to be critical.

I said in September that I cannot guarantee success in Iraq. That is still the case, although I think we are closer. I remain convinced that a major departure from our current engagement would bring failure, and we have to be clear with ourselves about what failure would mean. Al Qaeda is in retreat in Iraq, but it is not yet defeated. Al Qaeda's leaders are looking for every opportunity they can to hang on. Osama bin Laden has called Iraq "the perfect base," and it reminds us that a fundamental aim of al Qaeda is to establish itself in the Arab world. It almost succeeded in Iraq, we cannot allow it a second chance.

It is not only al Qaeda that would benefit. Iran has said publicly, it will fill any vacuum in Iraq, and extremist Shiite militias will re-assert themselves. We saw them try in Basrah and Baghdad 2 weeks ago. In all of this, the Iraqi people would suffer on a scale far beyond what we have already seen. Spiraling conflict could draw in neighbors with devastating consequences for the region and the world.

Mr. Chairman, as monumental as the events of the last 5 years have been in Iraq; Iraqis, Americans, and the world ultimately will judge us far more on the basis of what will happen, then what has happened. In the end, how we leave and what we leave behind will be more important than how we came. Our current course is hard, but it is working. Progress is real, although still fragile, and we need to stay with it.

Mr. Chairman, in the months ahead, we will continue to assist Iraq as it pursues further steps towards reconciliation and economic development. Over time, this will become increasingly an Iraqi process, as it should be. Our efforts will focus on increasing Iraq's integration, regionally and internationally, assisting Iraqi institutions, locally and nationally, to strengthen the political process, promote economic activity, and support the U.N. as Iraq carries out local elections toward the end of the year.

These efforts will require an enhanced civilian commitment and support from Congress and the American people.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I want to recognize and thank all of those who serve our country in Iraq—military and civilian. Their courage and commitment, at great sacrifice, has earned the admiration of all Americans. They certainly have mine, and it is my honor to be there with them.

Thank you, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. We're going to have a 6-minute round of questions.

General, after the brigade combat teams added by the surge are removed in July, leaving somewhat more U.S. troops in Iraq than before the surge. Nonetheless, you've recommended at that time to your chain of command that there then be a 45-day period of evaluation.

After that period, which takes us to September, you recommend commencing a process of assessment and then, over time, determine when you can make recommendations for further reductions. Now, that is a clear, open-ended pause.

Forty-five days, first, to evaluate, and then you'll commence a process of assessment. I'm not sure what the difference between evaluation and assessment is, but then there's some open-ended process of assessment. Over time, there will be another determination.

Now, it seems to me, what you've given to your chain of command is a plan which has no end to it. You do not use the word, which Secretary Gates used twice, which is that it would be a brief pause, and I assume that's intentional. Do you agree with Secretary Gates that it will be a brief pause, or not? Do you use the term brief?

General PETRAEUS. What Secretary Gates has described, as I understand it, is a brief period of consolidation and evaluation.

Chairman LEVIN. He used the term brief pause. He used the term brief pause, General. At any rate, without going into that; specifically, in February, he used the term brief pause. But, you're not using the term brief, is that correct?

General PETRAEUS. Sir, I'm not using the word brief nor the word pause. What I stated was a 45-day period for consolidation and evaluation as to examine the situation on the ground, do the battlefield geometry, consult with Ambassador Crocker on what might be called the political-military calculus, and then conduct the assessments. When the assessment is at a point that the conditions are met to recommend reduction of forces, then that's what we would do.

So, the bottom line, sir, is after this period in which we do the assessments, and as the conditions are met for further reductions, then we make those recommendations.

Chairman LEVIN. Do you have any estimate at all as to how long that second period is going to take? Are you giving us any idea as to how long that will take? You say "over time." Could that be a month? Could that be 2 months?

General PETRAEUS. Sir, it could be less than that.

Chairman LEVIN. Could it be more than that?

General PETRAEUS. It could be more than that. Again, it's when the conditions are met.

Chairman LEVIN. I understand.

General PETRAEUS. Then we can make a recommendation for further reductions.

Chairman LEVIN. Could it be 3 months?

General PETRAEUS. Sir, again, at the end of the period of consolidation and evaluation, it could be right then or it could be longer. [Audience disturbance.]

Chairman LEVIN. General, we're going to ask you this question again; could it be as long as 3 months?

General PETRAEUS. Sir, it could be.

Chairman LEVIN. Okay, that's all I'm asking.

General PETRAEUS. It is when the conditions are met.

Chairman LEVIN. I understand, but I just asked you a direct question; could that be as long as 3 months?

General PETRAEUS. It could be, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Could it be as long as 4 months?

General PETRAEUS. Sir, it is when the conditions are met, again.

Chairman LEVIN. Now, next question; if all goes well, what would be the approximate number of our troops there at the end of the year? Let's assume conditions permitted things to move quickly. What, in your estimate, would be the approximate number of American troops there at the end of the year? Just say if you can't give us an estimate.

General PETRAEUS. Right. Sir, I can't give you an estimate.

Chairman LEVIN. All right. You're not going to give us an estimate on that.

Next question. General, an April 3 article in the New York Times said that before the Iraqi Government's assault on the Mahdi Army in Basrah, you counseled Prime Minister Maliki, "We made a lot of gains in the last 6 to 9 months that you'll be putting at risk."

The article also states that you advised him not to rush into a fight without carefully sizing up the situation and making adequate preparations. Now, did he follow your advice?

General PETRAEUS. Sir, he laid out a plan that would, in fact, incorporate that advice.

Chairman LEVIN. He followed your advice, then?

General PETRAEUS. Once the forces got into Basrah, they ended up going into action more quickly than was anticipated.

Chairman LEVIN. Would you say that Maliki followed your advice?

General PETRAEUS. I would not. No, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. In your professional judgment, was the Iraqi Government operation in Basrah properly and carefully planned, and were the preparations adequate?

General PETRAEUS. Sir, there is no question but that it could have been better planned, and that the preparations could have been better. We've already done initial after-action reviews on that, in fact, there and also in Baghdad.

Chairman LEVIN. I understand the report that came afterward. But, I wonder if we could get a direct answer to my question. Could you give me a direct answer? In your judgment was the Iraqi Government operation in Basrah properly and carefully planned, and were the preparations adequate? Could you give me a direct answer?

General PETRAEUS. Sir, the answer is, again, it could have been much better planned. It was not adequately planned or prepared. Again, it was laid out to us, the objectives were described, and in fact, the process as it was laid out was logical, but I've not seen too many combat operations that have gone as they were planned, and this was not one either.

The forces were deployed very rapidly, and before all conditions were set, as they might have been, they were in combat.

Chairman LEVIN. General, to summarize in terms of where I think that testimony leads me to conclude—I will base my statement on your testimony—it was inadequately planned, it was inadequately prepared, it was followed by the use of American troops on that kind of planning, and that is totally unacceptable to me. I think that this open-ended pause that you have recommended takes the pressure off Iraqi leaders to take responsibility for their own country.

Senator McCain.

Senator MCCAIN. I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Petraeus, again, news reports said that Prime Minister Maliki only informed you shortly before the operation, is that correct? In Basrah?

General PETRAEUS. It is, Senator. We had a heads up in a Friday night meeting where we, in fact, were planning to resource operations in Basrah on a longer-term basis. The following Saturday, we had a meeting during which he laid out the plan that he had to deploy forces. He laid out the objectives, the lines of operations that he was going to operate along, and stated that he was moving there on Monday, himself.

Senator MCCAIN. It was not something that you had recommended.

General PETRAEUS. It was not something I recommended, no, sir.

Senator MCCAIN. News reports indicate that over 1,000 Iraqi Army and Police deserted or underperformed during that operation. This is 4 months after Basrah achieved provincial Iraqi control, meaning that all provincial security had been transferred to ISFs. What's the lesson that we're to draw from that? That 1,000 Iraqi Army and Police deserted or underperformed?

General PETRAEUS. What happened was, in one case, a brigade that literally had just come out of Unit Set Fielding was pressed into operation. The other lesson is a recurring one, and that is the difficulty of local police operating in areas where there is serious intimidation of themselves and of their families.

Senator MCCAIN. Suffice it to say, it was a disappointment.

General PETRAEUS. It was, although, it is not over yet, Senator. In fact, subsequent to the early days, they then took control of the security at the different ports, they continued to carry out targeted raids, the operation is still very much ongoing, and it is, by no means, over.

Senator MCCAIN. The Green Zone has been attacked in ways that it has not been for a long time, and most of that is coming from elements that leave Sadr City, or from Sadr City itself, is that correct?

General PETRAEUS. That's correct, Senator.

Senator MCCAIN. What are we going to do about that?

General PETRAEUS. We have already taken control of the area that was the principle launching point for a number of the 107-millimeter rockets into Baghdad, and have secured that area. Beyond that, again, ISFs are going to have to come to grips—politically as well as militarily—with the issue of the militia, and more importantly, the Special Groups.

Senator MCCAIN. What do you make of Sadr's declaration of a cease-fire?

General PETRAEUS. As with the cease-fire that was proclaimed in the wake of the militia violence in Karbala in August of last year, it is both to avoid further damage to the image of the Sadr Movement which, of course, is supposed to care for the downtrodden and, obviously, is a religiously-inspired movement, but which has been hijacked, in some cases, by militias. In fact, other elements have used it to cloak their activities, as well.

If I could, Senator, also point out that along with the operations in Basrah, there were operations in a number of other provinces in

Southern Iraq, all precipitated by this outbreak in militia violence. In Karbala, Najaf, Qadisiyah, Illa, Wasit, Dhi Qar and Muthanna, the ISFs actually did well, and in some cases did very well and maintained security.

The same is true in Baghdad, although again, even there, the performance was uneven in some cases.

Senator MCCAIN. There are numerous threats to security in Iraq. Do you still view AQI as a major threat?

General PETRAEUS. It is still a major threat, though it is certainly not as major a threat as it was, say, 15 months ago.

Senator MCCAIN. Certainly not an obscure sect of the Shiites, overall?

General PETRAEUS. No, sir.

Senator MCCAIN. Or Sunnis, or anybody else. Al Qaeda continues to try to assert themselves in Mosul, is that correct?

General PETRAEUS. It is, Senator. As you saw on the chart, the area of operation of al Qaeda has been greatly reduced in terms of controlling areas that it controlled as little as a year and a half ago, but clearly, Mosul and Ninawa Province are areas that al Qaeda is very much trying to hold on to. All roads lead through the traditional capital of the north.

Senator MCCAIN. They continue to be a significant threat?

General PETRAEUS. They do, yes, sir.

Senator MCCAIN. Ambassador Crocker, in your statement, you talked about a long-term relationship with Iraq, such as a security arrangement, diplomatic, economic, et cetera, that we have with some 80 countries. You envision this after we succeed in this conflict, is that correct? Would you talk a little bit about that? Elaborate a little more?

Ambassador CROCKER. Yes, sir. I would actually envision it as helping us to succeed in the conflict.

The effort will have two elements; one will be a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). That will be, as I said, approximately like what we have with 80 other countries. It will have some unique aspects to give our forces the authorities to continue operations after the end of 2008.

There will also be a broader Strategic Framework Agreement, first called for by the Iraqi leadership last August, and then reflected in the Declaration of Principles that Prime Minister Maliki and President Bush signed in November. This will cover, in addition to security, the political, the economic, the cultural, and the whole spectrum of our relations.

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you.

Finally, General Petraeus, Mosul continues to be a battle, is that correct?

General PETRAEUS. It does, Senator.

Senator MCCAIN. Who are the major adversaries in Mosul? It's a mixed population?

General PETRAEUS. The major adversaries are AQI, Ansar al-Suna, Jaish al-Mahdi, and some related Sunni extremist organizations that all are allies of AQI.

Senator MCCAIN. It was once said that al Qaeda cannot succeed without control of Baghdad, and they can't survive without control of Mosul, is that an oversimplification?

General PETRAEUS. A little bit, but not completely, sir. Again, it would be a significant blow to al Qaeda and in fact, the degree to which they're fighting reflects how much they want to retain the amount of presence that they do have in the greater Mosul area.

Senator MCCAIN. Finally, I hope in response, because my time is expired, could we talk a little bit more about the Iranian threat, particularly their stepped up support of various elements that are Shiite extremists in Iraq, particularly the role they've played in Basrah, as well as the southern part of the country? I've used up my time. I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator McCain.

Senator Kennedy.

Senator KENNEDY. Thank you.

Thank you for your service.

Ambassador Crocker, listening to you talk about this bilateral agreement with Iraq, I'm reminded that Secretary Gates told the Senate Armed Services Committee, "the agreement will not contain a commitment to defend Iraq," but as long as America maintains 10,000 troops there, there's little distinction between a treaty.

He has indicated that, of course, in 1953, Congress ratified the SOFA with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as a treaty. We have 140,000 men and women over there, so this isn't insignificantly different from those 84 other countries, and I think the record's very clear. Are you in agreement with what Secretary Gates has told this committee?

Just quickly, if you would, please?

Ambassador CROCKER. I am, sir. It is our intention to negotiate the SOFA as an executive agreement. We do not intend to provide any binding commitments that would trigger the advice and consent process with the Senate.

Senator KENNEDY. Well, that's going to be another issue that we're going to have to come back to.

So, you're not going to follow what has been done previously by President Eisenhower. Even under President Reagan, Congress approved agreements for the observer group in the Sinai Desert. You're not going to follow their precedent?

Ambassador CROCKER. We're going to keep Congress fully informed. I understand there are some briefings scheduled for the coming few days.

Senator KENNEDY. All right.

In listening to the testimony this morning, General Petraeus, it seems clear that the administration describes one Iraq, while we see another. The President sees an Iraq in which Iraqis want to make political accommodations, if only the security would allow it, but most Americans see an Iraq in which the premise of the President's policy has been proven hopelessly wrong, and will continue to be wrong as long as the commitment of our military remains open-ended.

The President sees an Iraq where progress is being made in neighborhoods, villages, towns, and cities across Iraq. But most Americans see an Iraq in which 4 million refugees have been displaced from their homes, their homes have been destroyed, neighborhoods ethnically cleansed, and overtaken by militia.

The President and the Vice President describe an Iraq whose oil would pay for the needs of its people, but most Americans see an Iraq that is sitting on billions in oil revenues, while the American taxpayer spends billions to fund Iraq's reconstruction.

A year ago, the President argued that we wouldn't begin to withdraw troops from Iraq because there was too much violence. Now, the President argues we can't begin to withdraw troops because violence is down. Whatever the conditions on the ground, the President's arrows always point in the same direction, to an open-ended commitment of our troops. American people deserve to know when the arrows will finally point to an exit from Iraq, and it's time to put the Iraqis on notice that our troops will not remain forever, so they will take the essential steps to resolve their differences.

Just to come back to a question that was asked earlier, Americans want to know, after we have spent approximately $24 billion in training Iraqi troops in 5 years, when are these forces going to be ready and willing to stand up and fight on their own so that the Americans don't have to fight for them, as we've seen with the 1,000 that effectively deserted or left their units?

General PETRAEUS. Senator, they are fighting and, as I mentioned, dying for their country in substantial numbers. Their losses, again, are some three times our losses of late, and I might add that the Sons of Iraq losses are between two and a half and three times our losses in addition to that. So they're very much fighting, and they are very much dying for their country.

They have, indeed, taken on the security tasks in a substantial number of provinces, and they are shouldering more of the burden in a number of the others.

In Basrah, there were not just the units that didn't do well, there were also units that did do well, and there were also units that did do very well. This is tough, tough combat. When forces are new and go into it, they do bow at times before they steady. We saw that in Basrah and we saw that to some degree in Baghdad.

Senator KENNEDY. Well, of course, there's 4,000 Americans that have died, as well, and 30,000 that have been wounded, as well.

Now, you mentioned that the battle in Basrah was to take on the criminals and extremists. Aren't we in there to battle al Qaeda?

General PETRAEUS. Basrah, Senator, is a Shiite area, and it has a small Sunni community.

Senator KENNEDY. But we're over in Iraq to take on al Qaeda, and here we have the Maliki Government moving in here to battle inter-sectarian violence that's taking place, which many believe can enhance the possibilities of civil war.

Let me ask you a question; were you at any meetings with the Vice President, Ambassador Crocker, where the issue of the Basrah invasion took place?

Ambassador CROCKER. It was not discussed.

Senator KENNEDY. It wasn't discussed at all during the Vice President's visit to Baghdad? The possibility of Maliki going into Basrah was not discussed? You were not at any meetings where the Vice President was present, or where this was discussed in his presence?

Ambassador CROCKER. It was not discussed in any meeting I attended, no, sir.

Senator KENNEDY. General?

General PETRAEUS. Same, Senator.

Senator KENNEDY. Thank you, my time's up.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you so much.

Senator Warner.

Senator WARNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, I commend you for your public service, and I mean that in a very sincere way. I've had the opportunity to meet with you and work with you, in-country, and back here in the continental limits of the United States.

I also want to say that I felt your statements were very informative and strong and clear. It reflects your own compassion for our forces, and you added the civilians who are abroad, Mr. Ambassador, and their families here at home. I should also like to add a word for all of those thousands and thousands of Americans who are trying to care for the wounded, and to provide compassion for their families.

I want to go back to your statements and frame a simple question.

General, you said the following, "With this approach, the security achievements of 2007 and 2008 can form a foundation for the gradual establishment of sustainable security in Iraq. This is not only important to the 27 million citizens of Iraq, it is also vitally important to the Gulf Region," and then you added, parenthetically, "to the citizens of the United States."

Mr. Ambassador, you said the following, "Americans have invested a great deal in Iraq, in blood, as well as treasure, and they have the right to ask whether it's worth it."

I would hope that you could frame a short message at the moment, both of you, to the American people, in response to the same question I asked of you last year, General. Is all of this sacrifice bringing about a more secure America?

General PETRAEUS. I've thought more than a bit about that, Senator, since September, and though I continue to think it's a question perhaps best answered by folks with a broader view, and ultimately will have to be answered by history, I obviously have thoughts on it and on the importance of achieving our objectives in Iraq.

Iraq has entailed a huge cost. Our men and women in uniform have made enormous sacrifices, over 4,000 of them, the ultimate sacrifice. The expenditure has been very substantial in numerous other respects, including the strain on the overall force and the opportunity costs in terms of not being able to focus more elsewhere.

Having said that, there is no longer a ruthless dictator in Iraq who threatened and invaded his neighbors, and who terrorized his own people. Beyond that, the seeds of a nescient democracy have been planted in an Arab country that was the cradle of civilization. Though the germination of those seeds has been anything but smooth, there has been growth.

All of this, again, has come at great cost. I recognize that the overall weighing of the scales is more than difficult, and believe it is best done at this point by someone up the chain with a broader perspective. Ultimately, it can only be answered by history once the outcome in Iraq is determined.

Having said all of that, I believe the more important question at this point is how best to achieve our important interests in Iraq. Interests that do have enormous implications, as I mentioned, for the safety and security of our country, 27 million Iraqis, the Mid-East region, and the world with respect to al Qaeda, the spread of sectarian conflict, Iranian influence, regional stability, and the global economy.

I do believe that we have made important progress in Iraq over the past year, and I believe the recommendations Ambassador Crocker and I have provided are the best course to achieve our important objectives in Iraq.

Senator WARNER. My time on the clock is moving very quickly, it was a fairly simple question. Does that translate into greater security for those of us at home? I pointed out this morning indications that up to 80 percent of the Americans just don't accept the premise at this point in time that it's worth it. Can you now, just in simple language, tell us, yes, it is worth it? It is making us safer here at home?

General PETRAEUS. Senator, I do believe it is worth it, or I would not have, I guess, accepted it. You do what you're ordered to do, but you sometimes are asked whether you'd like to or are willing to take on a task. I took on the task—the privilege—of command of Multi-National Force-Iraq because I do believe that it is worth it, and I do believe the interests there are of enormous importance to our country, not just to the people of Iraq and the people of that region and the world.

Senator WARNER. Mr. Ambassador, how do you answer it? Is it providing a greater security here at home?

Ambassador CROCKER. Sir, I'll try and answer that at two levels.

First, in the little over a year that I have been in Iraq, we have seen a significant degradation of al Qaeda's presence and its abilities. Al Qaeda is our mortal and strategic enemy. So, to the extent that al Qaeda's capacities have been lessened in Iraq, and they have been significantly lessened, I do believe that makes America safer.

The second level at which I would try and answer that is that Iraq remains a work in progress. I said in my statement that I believe there has been significant progress. I believe that it is worth continuing our efforts there, and I believe very strongly that any alternative course of action to that which we have laid out deserves the most careful scrutiny by the American people and their representatives, because the consequences could be extremely grave.

Senator WARNER. Let me quickly ask a second question, if I may. On the Strategic Framework Agreement, and SOFA, both very important, you said, and I took this note, "the strong interests and benefits that flow to Iraq." Are we utilizing this framework of negotiations to leverage a greater acceleration, a greater momentum by the Iraqi Government towards achieving the basic goals, be they legislative or military?

Ambassador CROCKER. I think the negotiations of the Strategic Framework Agreement, which is the broad agreement that covers political and economic and other aspects, will be an opportunity to have that kind of discussion. Those talks are not yet underway,

we're awaiting the Iraqi decision on who their negotiators will be on that. But I certainly see that as an opportunity.

Senator WARNER. To advance the reconciliation that is needed, we all recognize that a military solution is not possible here. It's only through a political one, and I look upon these as an opportunity to say to the Iraqis, "this is your chance, if we want a greater momentum towards political reconciliation." Can you tell us if that will be an element of the negotiations?

Ambassador CROCKER. It certainly would be my intention to make it so in the context of the Strategic Framework Agreement.

Senator WARNER. I thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Warner.

Senator Lieberman.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

General and Ambassador, thank you for your extraordinary service in the cause of freedom in Iraq.

I must say, your testimony is encouraging and yet quite realistic, and in my opinion, not overstated. You've told us that the strategy associated with the surge is working, progress has been made, but it's entirely reversible, you've been very frank about some of the problems that we still face.

I say what I'm about to say with respect to my colleagues who have consistently opposed our presence in Iraq. As I hear the questions and the statements today, it seems to me that there's a kind of hear no progress in Iraq, see no progress in Iraq, and most of all, speak of no progress in Iraq. The fact is there has been progress in Iraq, thanks to extraordinary efforts by the two of you, and all of those who serve under you on our behalf.

I wish we could come to a point where we could have an agreement on the facts that you are presenting to us; the charts you've shown, the military progress, the extraordinary drop in ethno-sectarian violence, the drop in civilian deaths, the drop in American deaths, and the very impressive political progress in Iraq since last September.

Hey, let's be honest about this, the Iraqi political leadership has achieved a lot more political reconciliation and progress since September than the American political leadership has. So, we have to give some credit for that.

I repeat, I wish we could have an agreement on the facts which you've presented. You work for us. I don't distrust those facts, and I wish we could go from an agreement on those facts, to figure out how we can move to more success so we can bring more of our troops home. Now, that's apparently not going to happen in the near future.

I want to ask you a question about Iran, because both of you have spoken with grave seriousness about the continuing Iranian threat. Senator Kennedy asked a question about the Iraqi Government initiative in Southern Iraq, and said there was no al Qaeda there, as you said, General Petraeus, there is no al Qaeda there. But there are Iranian-backed Special Forces that, from what you've told us today, continue to threaten what is our real goal, in Iraq, which is not just to defeat al Qaeda, it's to help stand up a self-governing, self-defending Iraqi Government.

Let me ask you first, are the Iranians still training and equipping Iraqi extremists who are going back into Iraq and killing American soldiers?

General PETRAEUS. That is correct, Senator. In fact, we have detained individuals, 4 of the 16 so-called master trainers, for example, are in our detention facility. You may recall that last year we detained the head of the Special Groups, and also the Deputy Commander of the Lebanese Hezbollah Department 2800, which is working with the Iranian Quds Force to train, equip, fund, and also direct these Special Groups.

The Special Groups' activities have, in fact, come out in greater relief during the violence of recent weeks. It is they who have the expertise to shoot rockets more accurately, shoot mortars more accurately, and to employ some of the more advanced material—the explosively-formed projectiles and the like—that have not just killed our soldiers, and Iraqi soldiers, but also have been used to assassinate two Southern Governors in past months.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Right.

General PETRAEUS. Two Southern Police Chiefs.

So they are a serious concern. I believe that this was brought out in greater relief for the Iraqi Government, as well, because they have conveyed directly to their Iranian interlocutors their concerns about the activities of the Quds Force with the Special Groups, and recognize the very clear threat that they present to security in Iraq.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Is it fair to say that the Iranian-backed Special Groups in Iraq are responsible for the murder of hundreds of American soldiers and thousands of Iraqi soldiers and civilians?

General PETRAEUS. It certainly is, I do believe that is correct. Again, some of that also is militia elements who have then subsequently been trained by these individuals, but there's no question about the threat that they pose, and again, about the way that has been revealed more fully in recent weeks.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Ambassador Crocker, picking up on something General Petraeus just said, though we all have questions about the recent Iraqi Government initiative under Prime Minister Maliki's leadership in the south, in Basrah, is it not possible that there's something very encouraging about that initiative, which is that it represents a decision by the Maliki Government in Baghdad to not tolerate the Iranian-backed militias, essentially running wild, and trying to control the south of his country?

Ambassador CROCKER. Senator, that's an excellent question. As I look at the Basrah operation, I look at it through a political lens, obviously, more than I can a military lens.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Right.

Ambassador CROCKER. General Petraeus has described some of the military's perspectives of that. The political ramifications, I think, are distinctly more positive because that is exactly the signal that the operation has sent within Iraq and, one would hope, in the region, that this Iraqi Government is prepared to go after extremist militia elements, criminal elements, of whatever sectarian identity they may be.

I know, for example, that ISFs are simultaneously engaged now in Basrah against Iranian-backed Shiite extremists, and are en-

gaged in Mosul against al Qaeda and its Iraqi supporters. I think that is important.

The reflection of that has been seen in the level of political unity behind the Prime Minister.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Right.

Ambassador CROCKER. I mean, there was the meeting of the Political Council of National Security on Saturday, and this brings together the President, the two Vice Presidents, the Speaker, the two Deputy Speakers of parliament, the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, and the heads of all major parliamentary blocks. They unanimously developed a 15-point statement that included support for the Prime Minister in these efforts; it called for the disarming and an elimination of all militia elements, and it had a strong message, warning of outside interference in Iraq's affairs.

So I think these are all highly positive developments that the government can continue to build on as it moves ahead with the other elements of the reconciliation agenda.

Again, I can't predict that this will take us to a new level in Iraq, but it is, from a political perspective, distinctly encouraging.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Lieberman.

Senator Inhofe.

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

All of us feel so strongly about the valor of our young troops. I will be attending a funeral at Arlington at 3 o'clock today for a Staff Sergeant, Christopher Hake, from Enid, OK. I just gave a tribute to him on the floor. There's so many others who are truly heroes. I think we need to keep repeating that, and reminding ourselves of the great service that they're performing.

Let me just ask a couple of questions on the detainee issue, I don't think that's come up yet. I know that some on the far left are going to try to paint a picture that the United States of America and our troops are somehow brutal and torturing detainees, and I think this is something that is going to be coming back, and they're going to try to make people believe this, yet it's not true. I recognize, initially, like Abu Ghraib, there's some that did not perform well, but after that, that act has been cleaned up.

I just got back from, I think my 14th trip in that area, but I was very careful to go to Camp Cropper and Camp Bucca, these are the largest detainee facilities that are there.

Lieutenant General Stone, I think, has done an outstanding job there, General Petraeus, and he was good enough to let me have a free hand to go through both of these facilities.

In doing so, I had an interpreter, and actually had interviews with some of these detainees, asking each one of them the question, "Have you ever been abused, mistreated?" I got nothing but positive answers. In fact, they were very, very positive toward us.

I'd like to have you make any comments you might make concerning the progress that's been made in the way that the detainees are treated.

General PETRAEUS. Well, Senator, there's been enormous change for the better in the detainee facilities. One focus, in fact, was to conduct counterinsurgency operations in the detainee facilities. In

other words, you cannot allow the irreconcilables to be with the reconcilables. You have to get the talk fury out of these large compounds, which you saw, of hundreds of detainees, and not allow them to prosthelitize, intimidate, and to take out physical abuse of their fellow detainees who don't willingly go with them and in fact, to avoid a situation where you have a training ground for the terrorist camp of 2008 or 2009.

We separated the irreconcilables, we are now providing education, there's always been good healthcare, good food, and good conditions. Also, in fact, to the point that there are over 100 who have actually requested to stay on in detention after their actual time was up, after their Reintegration Review Board, because they wanted to complete either job training or civilian education or some of the religious training that is offered in these facilities.

Again, this has been an enormous change, and General Stone and his team have done wonderful work in this regard. It has resulted, most importantly, in a recidivism rate, a return to Bucca or Cropper, if you will, that is very, very small compared with what it used to be. We track that because we have the biometrics on each of the individuals who have been in our facilities.

So, it's an enormous shift, it is something we are trying to capture in our doctrinal manuals so that we can continue to build on this, and to perform detainee operations in a much enhanced way over what was done before.

Senator INHOFE. Yes, that was my observation.

Ambassador Crocker, in your opening statement, you referred to, I believe, Ahmadinejad making the statement that, if something happens where we leave precipitously that there would be a vacuum, and he would fill that vacuum. You didn't take much time after that to say what would happen. Either one of you want to comment on what would happen if they were to fill that vacuum?

Ambassador CROCKER. Senator, I think the developments in Baghdad and Basrah over the last couple of weeks have been very instructive on a number of levels. I commented on one of them in response to Senator Lieberman's question. It is also very important in what it shows us of what Iran is doing. Because the general level of violence is down, we could see, I think, much more sharply defined, what Iran's role is in the arming and equipping of these extremist militia groups.

What it tells me is that Iran is pursuing, as it were, a Lebanization strategy; using the same techniques they used in Lebanon to co-opt elements of the local Shiite community, and use them as basically instruments of Iranian force. That also tells me, sir, that in the event of a precipitous U.S. withdrawal, the Iranians would just push that much harder.

Senator INHOFE. Yes, they said they would do that.

Last question here, as you well know, down at Camp Bucca, that's real close to Basrah where all of this was taking place, and I was there right after that took place. I'm a little confused, there's a lot of criticism over the way they performed. According to our troops over there, they were real pleased that they came in when they did with their troops and demonstrated very clearly that they're willing to take on that responsibility.

The impression I got from the troops that were there is that the Iraqis did what they should do, and they performed very well.

General PETRAEUS. Sir, I don't want to overstate the performance. However, the Iraqi people down there, by and large, were grateful for the action by the ISFs, by the decision that Prime Minister Maliki took to, in fact, confront militia, criminals, gangs, or whatever it might be.

In fact, as I mentioned, the operation is by no means complete. It is continuing, it continues to grow on a much more deliberate basis, instead of the fairly more rapid sudden basis in which it was started, and where there was some faltering at the beginning, as I mentioned.

They now control the different ports, for example, they control some key areas through which smuggling of weapons, as well as other contraband used to go. So, again, I'm not surprised to hear that comment.

Senator INHOFE. Yes, okay. My time's expired. But for the record, I'd like to kind of get your opinion as to where we are right now in the numbers, the sheer numbers of the ISFs. It's my understanding we're at about 140,000 now, we want to get up to around 190,000, but maybe a status, for the record.

General PETRAEUS. I'd be happy to.

[The information referred to follows:]

The total number of assigned Iraqi security forces as of April 30, 2008, is 561,963. This includes forces in the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Defense, and the Counterterrorism Bureau in the categories listed in the below table.

Iraqi Security Forces as of April 30, 2008[a]		
Component	Current Authorized Personnel[b]	Assigned Personnel[c]
Ministry of Interior (MoI) Forces[d]		
Iraqi Police Service[e]	288,001	289,106
National Police[f]	33,670	34,907
Border Enforcement	38,205	41,017
Total MoI	**359,876**	**365,030**
Ministry of Defense (MoD) Forces[g]		
Army	154,598	172,235
Army Training and Support Forces[h]	15,583	17,739
Air Force	2,907	1,567
Navy	1,893	1,783
Total MoD	**174,981**	**193,324**
Counter Terrorism Bureau		
Special Operations[i]	4,733	3,609
Total Iraqi Security Forces	**539,590**	**561,963**

a. Numbers do not include ministry staffs.
b. Numbers reflect Iraqi Government authorizations.
c. Numbers are based upon Iraqi Government payroll data.
d. Ministry of Interior strength excludes other services within the Ministry, including the headquarters, Forensics, Facility Protection Service, and contracted guards.
e. The Iraqi Police Service consists of all provincial police forces (station, patrol, traffic, and special units) assigned to all 18 Iraqi provinces
f. Including the national Emergency Response Unit
g. The Ministry of Defense authorized numbers are derived from Modified Tables of Organization and Equipment.
h. Army Training and Support Forces include logistics units and training center cadre.
i. Does not include personnel assigned to Counterterrorism Bureau or Counterterrorism Command headquarters.

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Inhofe.

Senator Reed.

Senator REED. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Petraeus, do you believe that the Mahdi Army will voluntarily disband and disarm at the request of the Prime Minister?

General PETRAEUS. Sir, some elements of the Mahdi Army could be incorporated into legitimate employment and other legitimate activities.

Now, standing down at the direction of the Prime Minister is something that would undoubtedly result in violence. However, as you may have seen recently, Muqtada al-Sadr has said that he would stand down the force at the request of the marjiya, the senior Shiite clerics in Najaf. We're just going to have to see how that plays out in the months ahead.

Senator REED. But, unless he is instructed by the senior Shiite clergy, he would likely resist that which would lead, in your words, to accelerated violence within the Shiite community.

General PETRAEUS. It depends, again, how it's done, Senator. If you can do this gradually over time, with the force in the background that is capable of taking out action and providing alternatives.

The key here is actually providing some other means of livelihood. The same problem that we had in a number of the different Sunni communities that were in the grip of al Qaeda.

Senator REED. Well, after the attack in Basrah, where the Prime Minister committed to destroy these elements, and then he had to withdraw, I think this is less of an employment problem than an existential problem of political survival, one or the other. In those terms, unless there's a voluntary compliance by the Mahdi Army, the alternatives for violence seem to be quite significant.

Let's assume that's the case; will you participate with your military forces in supporting the government?

General PETRAEUS. First of all, there is some voluntary standing down already, Senator. A number of the Sadr political leaders, in fact, have been engaging, and do not want to bring the violence.

Everyone has looked into the abyss and said, "This does not look good, let's step back and let's see if there is some alternative that can be followed."

Senator REED. What's the alternative?

General PETRAEUS. The alternative is the incorporation in the political process, and over time, providing some avenue for these young men to participate in the economy, and so forth. That has actually worked in a number of neighborhoods.

Senator REED. Like?

General PETRAEUS. Like West Rasheed and a variety of southern communities.

Senator REED. I think that's the same dilemma, and it's been a dilemma now for a year or more with respect to the Sons of Iraq where they're still being paid by us, and they're now being assumed, at least 60,000 of them, into the apparatus of the state of Iraq.

General PETRAEUS. Over, actually, it's well over 20,000 now, Senator.

Senator REED. Sixty thousand have still not been?

General PETRAEUS. I believe it's over 90,000 actually that are on the rolls right now, and that will either be transitioned between 20 and 30 percent to the ISFs, and the issue there is often illiteracy and/or physical disability.

Then the Iraqi Government has pledged funds, as I mentioned in my opening statement, to retraining programs, to education programs, and to other job employment programs.

Senator REED. So I can assume you and the Ambassador are giving advice to Maliki to go slow, to incorporate the Mahdi Army into the economy and political life of Iraq over many months. Is that the advice you're giving him? Or are you giving him any advice at all that seems to contradict what he tried to do in Basrah?

General PETRAEUS. Basrah did go much more suddenly than we expected, Senator. There's no two ways about it.

Senator REED. Okay.

General PETRAEUS. In fact, the report is a good account, I think that it is accurate to say that he thought perhaps it would be a bit more like when he went to Karbala back last year and the sheer presence and so forth would be adequate. That was clearly not the case in Basrah.

Now, in Basrah what has to be done, and they have just announced, for example, a $100 million program to begin addressing these kinds of issues and to get some alternatives to the young men down there to toting a gun on a street corner.

Senator REED. It seems to me that Basrah illustrated the ultimate conflict between Sadr and Maliki, and the elected government. That's a conflict they tried to resolve militarily. They failed because the military forces failed, and because people got very nervous that it was spinning out of control. But that ultimate conflict is still there, it's the existential conflict with respect to the Shiite community, and the potential violence in my mind, it's very real, and we'll be engaged somehow, either on the sidelines watching or swept up in it.

Let me switch to the Ambassador for a moment.

Mr. Ambassador, is the Mahdi Army the only Shiite organization that is receiving assistance, cooperation, and has significant contacts on a routine basis with the Iranians?

Ambassador CROCKER. I don't think so, Senator.

Senator REED. Who else might be having that kind of contact? If not military training, then a dialogue, money moving back and forth for other reasons?

Ambassador CROCKER. Those are two different aspects, and I'll address them separately.

There are other militia groups down in Basrah. One militia organization is called Thar-Allah, The Vengeance of God, whose leader, incidentally, is now in detention. They almost certainly get support from Iran, as does something called Iraqi Hezbollah. That does not necessarily imply a connection to Lebanese Hezbollah, but again, an extremist militia.

Iran has used the tactic as we've seen in Lebanon.

Senator REED. Would that include the Isqi elements, Badr Brigade?

Ambassador CROCKER. I'd put that in the second category.

Iran has a dialogue with——

Senator REED. Everyone?

Ambassador CROCKER. Everyone.

Senator REED. In the Shiite community.

Ambassador CROCKER. Right.

Senator REED. It's a mutual dialogue.

Ambassador CROCKER. Not just the Shiite community.

Senator REED. No.

Ambassador CROCKER. What has happened with the Supreme Council and Badr is that they've basically gotten out of the overt militia business, it's now the Badr Organization. Many of its elements did integrate with the ISFs.

Senator REED. Thank you, my time's expired. Thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Reed.

Senator Sessions.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'd like to thank both of you for your service. General Petraeus, I know this is your third year in Iraq. You've given your great abilities and commitment to our country because you were asked to serve, and you've done so excellently and progress has been made. When, a little over a year ago, you were confirmed here to go there, I think there was a feeling that we needed to give General Petraeus a chance one more time. The numbers show that you have made extraordinary progress, it seems to me.

I asked you at that time, when things looked rather grim, I asked you, did you believe that we had a realistic chance to be successful in Iraq, and you said you did, or you wouldn't take the job.

After this period of time there, now, a little over a year, how would you evaluate our prospects for success today?

General PETRAEUS. As I said, Senator, in my statement, there are innumerable challenges in Iraq in the way ahead, but I do believe that we have made progress, and I also believe that we can make further progress if we are able to move forward, as I've recommended.

Senator SESSIONS. I just wanted to thank you for an extraordinary demonstration of military leadership, and also I think we would share an affirmation of the American military who, under difficult circumstances, have performed so magnificently. To see us move from a time when I think this country was deeply concerned about our prospects in Iraq, to a period where we're seeing real progress, and I think we should listen to you about how to enhance that progress. Because this is a policy of the United States of America, it's a policy we voted on by three-fourths of both Houses of Congress, and we're making progress towards success, and we need to listen to those who helped get us there, about how we can maintain it.

Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus, I am curious about this activity, the action in Basrah and the south, when Prime Minister Maliki sent troops there. I appreciate your comments to Senator Lieberman, Ambassador Crocker, about the fact that there seems to be in that action a demonstration that the central government is willing to take on Shiite extremists, even though they are, at base, a Shiite-supported government. So, they're taking on, in some sense, some of their own base support, that many on this

panel, over the months, have complained they're not willing to do. It seems to me that they did do that.

Now, it does appear that they could have been more effective, perhaps, with better planning. But does this suggest that a significant event has occurred? Is Prime Minister Maliki developing some confidence now? Does his government see itself as a national Government of Iraq and is prepared to use military force to defend the concept of the country of Iraq? Is that an important thing that's happened here?

Ambassador CROCKER. Senator, I believe it is. That certainly is the reaction that we're seeing from Iraq's political leadership. I was in intensive contact with them during this period before our departure, as was General Petraeus, and the change in tone from other leaders toward the Prime Minister and his government is marked. They do see him as taking a strong stand against illegal elements without regard to their sectarian identity, and that has had enormous impact on the Sunnis, on the Kurds, as well as other Shiites.

So, I'm pretty cautious about labeling defining moments or watersheds. In fact I'm real cautious, and I certainly won't call what we've seen there, that. That will be visible only in retrospect. But, I do think it is important.

Senator SESSIONS. General Petraeus, the American military is just magnificent in after-action reports, analyzing what went wrong brutally honestly. Are the Iraqis actually evaluating what they did in Basrah, and do you think there's any prospects that they've learned from that?

General PETRAEUS. In fact, we've already run an after-action review, or they ran an after-action review, actually, in Baghdad, based on the actions in Baghdad at the same time.

Most of the participants in Basrah are still engaged in operations, and we will get to an after-action review with them, although we've done a macro-level one, obviously, with some pretty basic conclusions about the need for a more deliberate setting of conditions. That's the kind of approach that we take to set conditions, if you will, before you conduct an operation, and those conditions, in this case, were not as deliberately set as they might have been.

Senator SESSIONS. Finally, with regard to Iranian influence, how would you describe the situation in Basrah, in the south, in the Shiite community? How is that influenced by Iran, and to what extent has Iran been strengthened or weakened as a result of this military action?

General PETRAEUS. The bulk of the weaponry certainly came from Iran Senator. Again, they're very signature items that you see in the hands of the Special Groups, and of some of their militia allies; the explosively-formed projectiles, 107-millimeter rockets, and a variety of other items. We have seen those all repeatedly.

As to Iran's strengthening, or not, I think again, this is still very much ongoing. At the end of the day, Iran clearly played a role as an arbiter, if you will, for talks among all of the different parties to that particular action. Whether that strengthened them, or also made them realize that their actions have been destructive in helping a country they want to succeed, presumably the first Shiite-led

democracy, whether that gives them a good sense, or causes them also to draw back, I think, is very much in question right now.

The Ambassador might have a view on that.

Ambassador CROCKER. It's not something I could really give a definitive response to, but I would point out some things that are important to watch.

The militia actions, by and large, were very unpopular among Iraqis, and that is why the Prime Minister has gotten such broad-based political support. It is universally known or believed that the Iranians were behind them, so that unhappiness descends on them a bit, too.

I think one might look for a reconsideration in Tehran, as to just where they want to go in Iraq, because over the long term, as General Petraeus suggests, their interests, I think, are best served by the success of this state and this government. No country, other than Iraq itself, suffered more under Saddam Hussein than did Iran with that brutal 8-year war. So, they should be thinking strategically, and the reaction to the militias they support, I would hope would lead them to do that.

I note the statement by the Iranian government today actually condemning the indirect fire attacks on the international zone. I'm not sure what to make of it at this point, but it does underscore that Iranian influence in Iraq, while malign and destabilizing, is limited. Iraq is, in its essence, an Arab nation. Iraqi Shiite, Arab Shiite, died by the hundreds of thousands in the Iran/Iraq war defending their Arab state of Iraq against an Iranian enemy.

So there are some constraints on Iran, and this would be an excellent time for them to reassess what is ultimately in their own long-term interests.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Sessions.

Senator Akaka.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

General and Mr. Ambassador, I want to express my deep gratitude and appreciation for your service to our country, and also that of our military personnel who have served so well there.

General, the Army has been operating with a 15-to-12 deployment to home station ratio for some time now, and has indicated its desire to immediately shift to a 1-to-1 ratio, and if possible to a 1-to-2 ratio.

Part of the effort to achieve these numbers has been the increase in Army end strength. But these forces will not be available for deployment for some time. In the new to medium term, especially if a decision is made to freeze further troop withdrawals, the strain on equipment, on our forces, and on their families, as well, will continue.

My question to you, General, is it your understanding that most of the soldiers that will return for subsequent deployments to Iraq are getting about 6 months quality time with their families over a 3½ year period?

General PETRAEUS. My expectation would have been that it would be more than that, Senator. There's no question that there are individuals who are in their third tour in Iraq since it began, but they happen to be individuals that either stayed in a unit that

did just cycle back through, did not go off to another assignment in the Army somewhere, didn't go off to a school, or what-have-you.

Again, the Army would be the one best to answer what the average dwell time is across the force. There's no question that certain individuals in certain units, if they have stayed in those units over time, may now be on their third tour in Iraq. There's no question, as well, that a 15-month tour is very, very difficult on a soldier and on a family. As I mentioned, the strain on the force is something that I very much took into account when I recommended the continuation of the drawdown of the surge, and the way ahead, as well.

I might note that there is something very special to soldiers about doing what they are doing, however. The 3rd Infantry Division in Iraq right now on its third tour. You'll recall that it spearheaded the advance to Baghdad in the very beginning, in the liberation of Iraq, and is now back for its third tour. That division just met its reenlistment goal for the entire year at about the halfway mark in this fiscal year.

So, despite how much we are asking of our young men and women in uniform, they do recognize both the importance of what they're doing, and I guess this very intangible of being part of the brotherhood of the close fight, if you will, which is truly unique and special. They have continued to raise their right hand to volunteer.

We are very concerned about one subset of the population, and that is the young captains, of whom we've asked a great deal, as well, and that is one that the Army is looking very hard at.

I'm personally keenly aware of the stress. I have actually, with respect, been deployed now for 4½ years, since 2001, on operations alone, not to mention training and other activities. There's no question about the toll that it takes, and the challenges that it presents, not just to the soldiers, but to their families.

Senator AKAKA. General, given your perception of the security conditions in Iraq, how long before you feel we will be able to meet the Army's desired dwell ratio?

General PETRAEUS. Sir, again, that has to be a question for the Army. I don't know their force generation plans, what their projections are for the bringing on of additional brigade combat teams. I know that their initial goal is to try to get back to a 12-month deployment. I'd certainly support that, but they're the ones that are the generators of the force, not me.

Senator AKAKA. General, as chairman of the Readiness and Management Subcommittee, I am especially concerned that testimony that comes from combatant commanders outside of the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) indicate that operations in Iraq are affecting the readiness of their forces to be able to both train for and meet potential crises in their respective areas of operation.

A recent deterioration of relations between North and South Korea highlight the increased risks borne by the United States, should that situation continue to worsen to the point that military involvement is required.

Additionally, the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves testified that due to the high operations tempo of our Reserve Forces there is an "appalling gap" in readiness for Homeland Defense. Clearly there is widespread agreement in the Defense De-

partment that this level of U.S. troop commitment is unsustainable.

In your view, General, at what point must the military, in effect, hand over the majority of security responsibilities to the Iraqis so that the burden can be more equitably shared between our two countries, so that we can begin the reset of our forces, that is so long overdue?

General PETRAEUS. Senator, as I mentioned in my opening statement, there are already many multiples of ISFs serving in the Iraqi Police, Border Police, Army, small Air Force, Navy, and so forth. In fact, it is ISFs who are the cops on the beat, who are performing a vast number of tasks.

To be sure, our forces still have the unique capabilities in certain areas, when going against al Qaeda and other extremist elements, and obviously we have the enablers; air support, and some logistical capabilities and others, that the Iraqis do not yet have, but are working on.

In fact, one item during Basrah was that their C–130 fleet ferried an awful lot of the supplies and casualties to and from Baghdad and Basrah. So, again, they are gradually, slowly expanding.

By the way, they want to buy U.S. C–130s, and have asked to be able to buy the C–130J more quickly than, I think, the original response has been that it would be available.

So they are already shouldering an enormous burden. It is being handed to them, more all the time. But clearly, as we have seen, they need assistance in a number of different areas, and that's what we are providing.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you for your responses, General.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Akaka.

Senator Collins.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you.

General, 4½ years of deployment truly represents extraordinary sacrifice, and I want to begin my comments by thanking you and Ambassador Crocker for your service. It's been courageous, it's been extraordinary.

General, for years this committee has heard that progress is being made in the training and equipping of Iraqi forces. Each year, military commanders come before us, and they tell us that Iraqi troops are becoming more and more capable. Today, for example, you testified that the number of combat battalions capable of taking the lead in operations has grown to well over 100.

Success always seems to be just around the corner when it comes to training and equipping of Iraqi forces. Yet, when put to the test, the Iraqi forces have performed very unevenly, and it's very disturbing to me to read the press reports that more than 1,000 Iraqi soldiers refused to fight, fled, or abandoned their positions during the battle in Basrah.

Ultimately, as the Ambassador has said this morning, the fate of Iraq is up to the Iraqi people. My concern is, as long as we continue to take the lead in combat operations, rather than transitioning to more limited missions, the Iraqis are never going to step up to the plate and fight for their country.

So my question to you is, why should American troops continue to take the lead in combat operations at this point, after years of training and equipping the Iraqi forces? After spending tens of billions of dollars on training and equipping of Iraqi forces?

General PETRAEUS. First of all, Senator, in Basrah, we did not take the lead. Basrah is a Province that is under Iraqi control, the sovereign Iraqi Prime Minister made a decision to confront a challenge. It was not just a political challenge, this is a militia gang—criminals who were threatening the population. He then deployed forces very rapidly, frankly, more rapidly than we thought they could deploy. Over the course of a week, the Iraqis deployed the combat elements of a division.

Then they moved very rapidly into combat operations, again, too rapidly, most likely, without setting all of the proper conditions and so forth.

But they were in the lead. We did provide some close air support, attack helicopters. We augmented their C–130 fleet, their helicopters were also ferrying in and out of Basrah, as well, but we clearly did provide a number of enablers. They do not yet have ISR platforms, they don't have counter-fire radar, they don't have a sufficiently robust expeditionary logistics structure, they do now provide their own logistics at their own bases, at their own police academies, and all of the rest of that. But again, taking the next step is doing it after you've deployed the better part of a division's worth of combat forces; two brigades within about 36 hours of notification, another later in that week.

They are actually taking the lead in Anbar Province in a number of different places. There's a guiding hand there, but one of the largest reductions in the reduction of surge forces will come in Anbar, which you'll recall, of course, in the fall of 2006 was assessed as lost, and then through the awakening, through the combat operations, additional forces, and so forth, Iraqi, as well as coalition, over time, it has become the province that is actually relatively peaceful, and actually on the road toward prosperity.

Again, it is a process, rather than a light switch, and when the going has gotten tough, or where it requires more sophisticated application of force, we have had to help them out.

Senator COLLINS. But 1,000 troops?

General PETRAEUS. It's 1,000 out of I don't know how many tens of thousands, actually, were there. Confronted by very, very tough militia elements, and in fact, because of the position into the forces where they were able to get overwhelmed by larger groups of the militia, put them into an untenable situation. So, I'm not in the least bit apologizing for them, but I do see the situation they were confronted with, because of the speed with which they went into action, was very, very difficult for any troopers.

What I would point to is that in other provinces where we have virtually no presence, or perhaps a Special Forces A Team, such as in Karbala Province, in Najaf, in Illa, in Nasiriyah, and others in the south where, because of the operations in Basrah, there were also outbreaks of militia violence. In those areas the Iraqis proved equal to the task, and in fact, were able to maintain security.

The same with varying levels in certain areas of Baghdad.

Senator COLLINS. Ambassador, in 2003, several of us proposed that the reconstruction aid to Iraq be structured as a loan rather than a grant. You may recall that debate. We didn't prevail. Now, we look at $100 a barrel oil, an Iraqi budget that was predicated on $50 a barrel oil, and the Iraqis, sir, are clearly reaping a windfall from the higher oil prices.

You mentioned that the era of our paying for major reconstruction is over. But we're continuing to pay the salaries of the Sons of Iraq, in many cases, we're continuing to pay for the training and equipping of Iraqi forces. I'm told that we're even continuing to pay for fuel within Iraq.

Isn't it time for the Iraqis to start bearing more of those expenses, particularly in light of a windfall of revenues, due to the high price of oil?

Ambassador CROCKER. Senator, it is. That is something that both General Petraeus and I are engaged on.

We've had several discussions with the Prime Minister, for example, on the importance or the need for the Government of Iraq to pick up the funding for employment projects, and he agrees. So, we're working out the ways to do this.

I think what we have to focus on in the period ahead is transitioning. It will be, like everything else in Iraq, a complex process. What do they have the capacity to do, how do they get the capacity to do it? But, I think that's clearly the direction, not only should we move in, but that we are moving in.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Collins.

Senator Bill Nelson.

Senator BILL NELSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, I have a series of questions. If I don't finish them now, I will have an opportunity to continue this afternoon in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Please understand my comments, my questions, it is with a great deal of respect and deference to the two of you, and appreciation for your service to our country.

Now, I want to frame my questions within the context of more than a year ago. Because the whole idea that you all presented to us was that the military surge would stabilize the situation so that the environment would be created in order for us to have political reconciliation over there.

Indeed, January a year ago, in 2007, Secretary Gates said that he thought that by March 2007, or about 3 months after he testified, he said that he would know whether or not the surge was working. Well, of course, that time came and went. Then, one of those times you were in front of us, General, I don't remember if it was in your confirmation hearing or if it was one of the reports that you gave back to us, you testified that the surge was necessary for political reconciliation.

Now, I heard some disturbing testimony last week in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee from two retired generals. One, retired Lieutenant General Odom, who said, "Violence has been temporarily reduced, but today there is credible evidence that the political situation is thus far more fragmented." Then he went on to talk about Basrah, and so forth.

Then retired four-star General McCaffrey; in response to my question about what's your degree of optimism or pessimism, this is what he says, "It's a hell of a mess. I mean, there's just no way about it. It's a $600 billion war, 34,000 killed and wounded. We've alienated most of the global population, the American people don't support the war, and the Iraqi Government's dysfunctional. The ISFs are inadequate, ill-equipped, and we have very little time—by the way, I'm not recommending that we come out of Iraq in a year or 3—but that's what's going to happen. This thing is over. So, the question is how do we stage as we come out." Continuing, this is General McCaffrey, "and you have to, at some point, hit the civil war in the direction of somebody who's more likely to govern Iraq effectively than the current, incoherent, dysfunctional regime that's in power."

So, I go back to the original predicate with which we talked about the surge. Has the political reconciliation happened?

General?

General PETRAEUS. As the Ambassador laid out, there has been agreement among the different political parties on a number of pieces of important reconciliation, if you will, laws that represent reconciliation. Among them is, in fact, the de-Baathification reform, there's also the Provincial Powers Law, there is a Pensions Reform bill that is little noticed, but actually extends pension rights to tens of thousands of Iraqis who were shut out because of de-Baathification.

Senator BILL NELSON. That's a step in the right direction. Now, the question is: have those laws been implemented?

General PETRAEUS. I believe that the Pensions Law is, again, in the process of being implemented. Again, de-Baathification, they're collecting the information for that.

Senator BILL NELSON. Have those laws been implemented to the point that we can see in Iraq that there is this political reconciliation which is the goal in the first place, coming back to over a year ago, of the surge?

Ambassador CROCKER. Senator, if I might, I noted in my testimony when I talked about these laws, that obviously how they are implemented is going to be key. The Amnesty Law, part of the legislative package passed in the middle of February, is being implemented 24,000 applications for amnesty received, and about 17,000 approved. That's actually moved out at pretty impressive speed.

The Provincial Powers Law comes into effect after the forthcoming provincial elections. It does not apply to the current provincial councils. The one important step it did foreshadow is an electoral law to set the conditions for those elections, that is actively being pursued within the Council of Ministers, and it's a process, incidentally, where we're involved at Iraqi Government request, as well as the U.N., to help them get it right, particularly with respect to the role of women in these elections.

So there is a lot to be done, Senator, but they have passed the laws, and in several cases, particularly the amnesty law, we see them moving out pretty rapidly.

Senator BILL NELSON. So you think we are moving toward political reconciliation?

Ambassador CROCKER. I think the various elements I mentioned in my statement—both the national-level legislation, the way parliament works, because there was a lot of cross-block horse-trading going on, particularly in that February package, that gives and takes from all over the political groups, which of course, in many respects are sectarian organized—are as encouraging as the results.

So, yes, I think they're moving in the right direction. But, yes, I also believe they have an awful lot more in front of them.

Senator BILL NELSON. I look forward to continuing this this afternoon.

Thank you, gentlemen.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Nelson.

Senator Graham.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, both of you, well done. According to some, we should fire you, it sounds like, that just—really nothing good has happened in the last year, and this is a hopeless endeavor. Well, I beg to differ. If I could promote you to five-stars, I would.

I don't know where to send you, you've been in every bad place there is to go, so I'd send you to a good place, Ambassador Crocker.

I cannot tell you how proud I am of both of you. Let's start this with kind of a 30,000-foot assessment.

The surge, General Petraeus, was a corrective action, is that fair to say?

General PETRAEUS. That's correct, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. The reason it was a corrective action is, between the fall of Baghdad in January 2007, all of the trend lines were going in the wrong way—economic stagnation, political stagnation, increased proliferation of violence—therefore, something had to be done. That something was called the surge.

Now, I just ask the American people and my colleagues to evaluate fairly from January 2007 to July 2008 and see what's happened. The challenges are real, but there are things that have happened in that period of time that need to be understood as being beneficial to this country, they came at a heavy price, and al Qaeda cannot stand the surge. If you put a list of people that wanted us to leave, the number one group would be al Qaeda, because you've been kicking them all over Iraq.

Now, the reason they came to Iraq is why, General Petraeus?

General PETRAEUS. That al Qaeda came to Iraq, sir?

Senator GRAHAM. Yes.

General PETRAEUS. To establish a base in the heart of the Arab world, in the heart of the Middle East.

Senator GRAHAM. Are they closer to their goal after the surge or further away?

General PETRAEUS. Further away, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. If you had to pick one thing to tell the American people that was the biggest success of the surge, what would it be?

General PETRAEUS. Probably Anbar Province and/or just the general progress against al Qaeda.

Senator GRAHAM. Would it be the fact that Muslims tasted al Qaeda life in Iraq and Iraqi Muslims joined with us to fight al Qaeda?

General PETRAEUS. I think the shift in Sunni Arabs against al Qaeda has been very, very significant. The rejection of the indiscriminate violence, the extremist ideology, and really, even the oppressive practices associated with al Qaeda is a very, very significant change.

Senator GRAHAM. Is it fair to say that when Muslims will stand by us and fight against bin Laden, his agents, and sympathizers, we're safer?

General PETRAEUS. Absolutely.

Senator GRAHAM. Ambassador Crocker, what is Iran up to in Iraq?

Ambassador CROCKER. Senator, I described what I believed to be an effort at Lebanization through the backing of different militia groups.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay, let's stop there. Lebanon kicked Syria out a few years ago, and they tried to create some form of a democracy. Hezbollah, backed by Iran, had a say in that endeavor. Is that correct?

Ambassador CROCKER. That is correct, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. They launched an attack from Lebanon against Israel at the time the U.N. was about to sanction Iran for their nuclear endeavors. Is that correct?

Ambassador CROCKER. I believe so, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. So, is it fair to say that from an Iranian point of view, one of their biggest nightmares would be a functioning democracy in Lebanon, and a functioning representative government in Iraq on their borders?

Ambassador CROCKER. Certainly their behavior would indicate that that may be the case.

You make an important point. We look at Iraq as a nation in its own terms. The region looks at it a little bit differently. Iran and Syria have been cooperating over Lebanon since the early 1980s, over a quarter of a century. They have worked together against the Lebanese and against our interests.

They're using that same partnership in Iraq, in my view, although the weights are reversed, with Iran having the greater weight, Syria the lesser. But they are working in tandem together against us and against a stable Iraqi state.

Senator GRAHAM. If I can walk through what I think these laws mean to me, and this is just my opinion.

Provincial elections in October are important to me because it means that the Sunnis understand that participating in representative government seems to be in their interest, therefore they're going to vote in October 2008, and they boycotted in 2005. Is that correct?

Ambassador CROCKER. That's one reason they're important, yes.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay, so the Sunnis are going to come out, by the millions, we anticipate, to send representatives to Baghdad or to the Provinces rather than sending bombs. Is that correct?

Ambassador CROCKER. That is what I would expect, yes.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay, now the reason the surge has been successful to me, General Petraeus, is that the Anbar Province has been liberated from al Qaeda, but we've had a reduction in sectarian violence. Is that true?

General PETRAEUS. That is true.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay, now this breathing space that we've been urging to have happen by better security, by my opinion has produced economic results not known before January 2007. Is that correct? The economy is improving?

General PETRAEUS. That is correct.

Senator GRAHAM. The Iraqis will be paying more over time to bear the burden of fighting for their freedom.

General PETRAEUS. That's correct.

Senator GRAHAM. They will be fighting more to bear the burden of their freedom. Is that correct?

General PETRAEUS. Correct.

Senator GRAHAM. Is there any way that Iraq could be a failed state, and it not affect our national security?

General PETRAEUS. No, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. What would happen if the United States began to remove a brigade a month out of Iraq? What would be the military consequences of such an endeavor, in your opinion, if we announced, as a nation, we're going to withdraw a brigade out of Iraq every month?

General PETRAEUS. Sir, it clearly would depend on the conditions at that time. If the conditions were good, quite good, then that might be doable.

Senator GRAHAM. At this point in time, does that seem to be a responsible position to take, given what you know about Iraq, to make that announcement now?

General PETRAEUS. Senator, I have advocated conditions-based reductions, not a timetable. War is not a linear phenomenon, it's a calculus, not arithmetic. That is why I have recommended conditions-based reductions following the completion of the surge forces drawdown.

Chairman LEVIN. Senator Graham, thank you.

Senator Ben Nelson.

Senator BEN NELSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Petraeus, Ambassador Crocker, first I thank you for your service, and say how proud I am of the American men and women who are serving in the military in Iraq and elsewhere around the world.

I might add that, as a proud Nebraskan, a proud American, I witnessed on one of the national news channels, an American—Captain Logan Veath—embedded with the Iraqi Army in Sadr City, leading forth the challenge and doing a remarkable job. We're all proud of him and those who he represents, as well.

In 2003, as Senator Collins mentioned, Senator Bayh and I and others introduced legislation to require that at least part of the money that was going for reconstruction in that supplemental be considered a loan forgivable to a grant—part of a loan, but part of it also a loan to be forgivable to a grant—if the rest of the countries would forgive the IOUs of Iraq that they held. The administration blocked it, even though it passed the Senate, because they said

that they were going to the donor's conference and this would impair their ability to get the other countries, as part of the coalition, to be donors.

It turned out to be a lender's conference, in general, because the others did loan the money. Now we have an opportunity to go back and look at what Secretary Wolfowitz said in 2003, "We really ought to be able to get our money back from Iraq because through their oil revenues, they're going to be able to pay for the war themselves, finance it themselves." That was reconstruction, not the war, but the reconstruction.

We have your comment, Ambassador Crocker, that they're in a position soon, or something, to be able to take on that responsibility. Soon, to me, means now. What I think we should do is in this supplemental, and I'll introduce legislation with others to make any further reconstruction money a loan. Purely and simply, to be repaid, not forgiven. Any other money that has been appropriated, but unspent, to date, a loan, as well.

When Iraq is today on the basis of $111 barrel oil, and $3.25 and upwards gas at the pump here in the United States, it just does not seem responsible for us to continue to borrow from our grandchildren and China and other places around the world to be able to finance, in effect, what is their future opportunity. It seems to me that now is the time.

You also, Ambassador Crocker, said that you think they should be doing this soon. Will there be a change in the thinking of the administration on this? Will they now support legislation that could be worked out to make that now, make soon now, into the future, on these future appropriations and past appropriations that are unspent?

Ambassador CROCKER. Senator, there is very much an interest in moving the financing from us to the Iraqis.

Senator BEN NELSON. Well, I think you answered my question, but there was an interest back in 2003 when Secretary Wolfowitz said that they ought to be able to finance their own reconstruction. I'm trying to find out when the soon can be now.

Ambassador CROCKER. Senator, with respect to reconstruction, soon basically is now.

Senator BEN NELSON. In terms of a loan?

Ambassador CROCKER. In terms of the United States no longer being involved in the physical reconstruction business.

Senator BEN NELSON. What about the money that's in the current supplemental that's there for reconstruction, is that structured as a loan?

Ambassador CROCKER. Sir, that is not, in my definition, it is not for reconstruction. These are, for example, some USAID programs that we think are very important to stabilization. In conjunction with the military's CERP spending, we will move into immediate post-kinetic situations and get people going with jobs and things like that.

Senator BEN NELSON. Well, then let's call it post-kinetic aid, as well. It seems to me that if we're paying for what is not, let's say, military hardware, because they're picking up more of the cost, we ought to be looking at training costs that we're engaged in. I just think that there's a point in time, and it's now, when we need to

find a way to make sure that Iraq is financing more of its own present and future, rather than incurring those costs ourselves. When they're adding $50 to $60 billion to surplus, at a time when we're developing hundreds of billions of dollars of deficit, it just doesn't make sense for us to be the financier of first resort.

Ambassador CROCKER. Sir, as I said, I'm committed to that. At the same time, I don't think you have a one-size-fits-all situation here. A number of our programs, particularly those that get down to the local level, that our PRTs, for example, identify and execute, the Iraqi Government is really not going to be positioned to pick that up, or even identify it.

Senator BEN NELSON. I don't care whether they can do that, we can pay it. Whether they can get the money out of their treasury or not is secondary. If we can do it, we should do it, and then they should repay us.

What about the money that's already been appropriated but unspent? Will that now not be spent?

Ambassador CROCKER. If you're talking about reconstruction——

Senator BEN NELSON. Reconstruction.

Ambassador CROCKER. We're down to like the last 2 or 3 percent of the Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund projects. These are things that are underway that we're going to be bringing to completion.

Senator BEN NELSON. Well, I think there are billions and billions of dollars that would fall into that category, and for me, a billion dollars is not pencil dust.

Ambassador CROCKER. I understand your point, Senator, but at the same time, again, these are projects that are underway. I think we'd have to think very carefully if we want to risk a halt in ongoing completion while we try and negotiate with the Iraqis on——

Senator BEN NELSON. Well, I think that's all well and good, but I wish we'd thought more carefully earlier, and got this set, such as, back in 2003.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Nelson.

Senator Thune.

Senator THUNE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General, Ambassador, thank you very much for your extraordinary service to our country, and thank you for your very candid assessment of how things are going. As always, you've been very forthright in your testimony, and we appreciate that, because I think it's important that we have a good understanding of conditions as you understand them to be on the ground. We make decisions on funding both on the military level and the other benchmarks that we're trying to achieve in regard to economic and political progress in the region.

I'm wondering if you might be able to elaborate a little bit on the whole issue of the Shiite militias and the Iranian influence there. It seems to me, at least, that a lot of our success these past several months has been because of the cease-fire that the Mahdi Army has observed, and my question, I guess, gets at the point of whether or not Sadr really is in control, or whether the Iranians are pulling the strings there. If we're going to continue to see reduction in

violence and a lessening of American casualties and civilian casualties there, that's going to be a big factor.

I guess I'd be interested in knowing, General, what your impressions are about who really is in charge of these Shiite militias and the Mahdi Army; is it Sadr or is it the Iranians?

General PETRAEUS. Senator, let's go back to when the original cease-fire was put in place in August, and that was directed by Muqtada al-Sadr. It was because of violence that was precipitated in the Holy City of Karbala by militia elements that refused to surrender their weapons before going into the shrine area. That did a great deal of damage to the reputation of the overall Sadr Movement, which is first and foremost a political movement, and then also has the associated militia.

Added to that, over time, were connections between the militia and/or the Special Groups, which are these elements that are affiliated with or associated with the Sadr militia, but have been selected carefully, and then typically are paid for, trained by, and armed by Iran, by the Quds Force, in particular, and which do take direction from the Quds Force.

The hand of Iran was very clear in recent weeks. There was a recognition, we think, in Iran based on people who talked to some of the leaders there, that in fact what was transpiring was very damaging not just to Iraq, not just in the violence to the Iraqi people, and not just to the reputation of the militia, but also was backfiring on Iran itself.

In fact, I think arguably it did generate a unification in concern among Iraqi political leaders about Iranian activity in Iraq that was nowhere near as great—I would argue—just a month or so ago.

As we mentioned earlier, both of us have said that it sort of brought out in higher relief, the activities of Iran, of the Quds Force in particular, and its involvement with these Special Groups, and with the weapons and training that they provided to them.

Senator THUNE. Let me ask you, General, there have been some here who have talked about putting restrictions on or limiting funding for the CERP. Could you describe that program and it's value to commanders in the field?

General PETRAEUS. Senator, a number of us at different times have stated that there's a point in operations where money becomes your most important ammunition. Typically, it's small amounts of money at local levels where, when you have all of a sudden the opportunity because of security improvements, you can very rapidly commit it again in small amounts.

We have also used it to fund the so-called Sons of Iraq. As I had on one of the charts, I think about $16 million a month is the payroll for those individuals, on average, and I can tell you the savings that we have had in vehicles not lost in areas where they used to be lost. There's an area south of Baghdad, southwest, that used to be called the "Triangle of Death." That area has actually been very, very quiet over the course of the last 6 months, since our forces and Iraqi forces cleared it of al Qaeda, and then Sons of Iraq stood up to help secure a local community.

It's a big reason why we have the enormous numbers of caches being found. Most of them are being identified by these local indi-

viduals or by local citizens who have benefited from various projects done by the CERP. They have seen the benefits of improved security and started to see some economic growth. Oftentimes, the pump is primed with small amounts of CERP very early in that process, before the Iraqi Government can reconnect to these communities, and get the different ministry activities out there helping them.

By the way, this is the reason Iraq has committed some of its money—$300 million is its initial amount—to fund something called Iraqi CERP, which will help enormously and can greatly expand the impact of the overall program.

We have a capacity out there in a lot of these communities, particularly the ones that over the course of the last year were recently cleared of al Qaeda or other extremists. We have an ability to spend that money, that they do not. They are now very much our partners in that and very much doing a cost-sharing approach, and beyond, over time.

Senator THUNE. Last week the Readiness and Management Support Subcommittee received testimony from the Service Vice Chiefs on the current readiness of the forces, and they all testified that military units that are deploying to you in theater are currently adequately trained, equipped, and ready to carry out the missions that you've assigned. As the combatant commander, is that your perception as well?

General PETRAEUS. Senator, I would say that this is the best Army that I've ever seen in 34 years of service. Now, it is an Army that is capable of what we might call full spectrum; in fact, what our doctrine does call full spectrum operations. Counterinsurgency operations include not just the stability and support operations but also offense and defense.

We have, in the last year, for example, done major operations in places like Ramadi, Baqubah, South Baghdad, and a variety of other locations that have involved all of our different capabilities in the military, not just the soft side of stability and support operations.

I've said on a number of occasions that there were two enormous changes that I found when I got back to Iraq in January 2007. The first, in February 2007, was the damage done by sectarian violence which tore the fabric of society; the second was how much our leaders "get it" about what it is that we're trying to do over there as a result of all the changes made by the Services in terms of doctrine, education, preparation of units, and so forth.

So the units are exceedingly well-trained, and they are the best equipped. When I look back at the fact that as a division commander, when we crossed the berm and went into Iraq, we had one unmanned aerial vehicle that we were all fighting over within the entire Corps. Now look at the enormous proliferation of ISR platforms, the enormous tools that the different intelligence agencies have now provided to us, the fusion of intelligence, in the way that Special Forces, Special Mission Elements, and conventional forces all work together, and literally have fusion cells, the proliferation of real-time situational awareness tools, just on and on and on, satellite tracking and communications. We are vastly better than where we were in 2003 when we went through the berm and espe-

cially in terms of so-called full spectrum operations, which is what most of us think we'll be involved in in the future. There are not too many peer competitors, as they say, out there that want to take us on toe-to-toe out in the desert somewhere in open tank warfare.

Senator THUNE. Thank you all, again, very much for your service to our country, and please convey to those who serve under your command our deep appreciation for their service and sacrifice, as well.

General PETRAEUS. I will, Senator.

If I could just thank the committee for one thing, in particular, and that is the mine-resistant, ambush-protected (MRAP) vehicles. These have been lifesavers. Countless soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines have been saved by these vehicles, and by the additional protection that they provide to the occupants.

Senator THUNE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you for that, General.

Thank you, Senator Thune.

Senator Clinton.

Senator CLINTON. Thank you very much.

Thank you, General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker, for your long and distinguished service to our Nation.

Before I ask you any questions, I just wanted to respond to some of the statements and suggestions that have been made leading up to this hearing, and even during it, that it is irresponsible or demonstrates a lack of leadership to advocate withdrawing troops from Iraq in a responsible and carefully-planned withdrawal. I fundamentally disagree.

Rather, I think it could be fair to say that it might well be irresponsible to continue the policy that has not produced the results that have been promised, time and time again, at such tremendous cost to our national security and to the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States military.

Our troops are the best in the world, and they have performed admirably and heroically in Iraq. However, the purpose of the surge—let's not forget—as described by the Bush administration was to create the space for the Iraqis to engage in reconciliation and make significant political progress.

However, since General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker last testified in September, even General Petraeus, as recently as 3½ weeks ago, has acknowledged that the Iraqi Government has not made sufficient political progress.

Our current strategy in Iraq has very real costs. We rarely talk about the opportunity costs, the opportunities lost because of the continuation of this strategy. The longer we stay in Iraq, the more we divert resources, not only from Afghanistan, but other international challenges, as well.

In fact, last week, Admiral Mullen said that the military would have already assigned forces to missions elsewhere in the world were it not for, what he called, "the pressure that's on our forces right now." He admitted that force levels in Iraq do not allow us to have the force levels we need in Afghanistan.

The Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, General Cody, testified last week that the current demands for forces in Iraq and Afghanistan limits our ability to provide ready forces for other contingencies.

Finally, the cost to our men and women in uniform is growing. Last week, the New York Times noted the stress on the mental health of our returning soldiers and marines from multiple and extended deployments. Among combat troops sent to Iraq for the third or fourth time, more than one in four shows signs of anxiety, depression, or acute stress according to an official Army survey of soldiers' mental health.

The administration and supporters of the administration's policy often talk about the cost of leaving Iraq, yet ignore the greater costs of continuing the same failed policy. The lack of political progress over the last 6 months, and the recent conflict in Basrah, reflect how tenuous the situation in Iraq really is, and for the past 5 years, we have continually heard from the administration that things are getting better, that we're about to turn a corner, that there is finally a resolution in sight. Yet, each time, Iraqi leaders fail to deliver.

I think it's time to begin an orderly process of withdrawing our troops, start rebuilding our military, and focus on the challenges posed by Afghanistan, the global terrorist groups, and other problems that confront America. I understand the very difficult dilemma that any policy, with respect to Iraq, poses to decision-makers. If there were an easy or very clear way forward, we could all, perhaps, agree on the facts about how to build toward a resolution that is in the best interest of the United States, that would stabilize Iraq, and would meet our other challenges around the world.

With respect to our long-term challenges, Ambassador Crocker, the administration has announced that it will negotiate an agreement with the Government of Iraq by the end of July that would provide the legal authorities for U.S. troops to continue to conduct operations in Iraq. Let me ask you, do you anticipate that the Iraqi Government would submit such an agreement to the Iraqi parliament for ratification?

Ambassador CROCKER. The Iraqi Government has indicated it will bring the agreement to the Council of Representatives. At this point, it's not clear to me whether that will be for a formal vote or whether they will repeat the process they used in November with the Declaration of Principles, in which it was simply read to the members of the parliament.

Senator CLINTON. Does the administration plan to submit this agreement to our Congress?

Ambassador CROCKER. At this point, Senator, we do not anticipate that the agreements will have within them any elements that would require the advice and consent procedure. We intend to negotiate this as an executive agreement.

Senator CLINTON. Ambassador Crocker, it seems odd, I think, to Americans who are being asked to commit for an indefinite period of time, the lives of our young men and women in uniform, the civilian employees who you rightly referenced and thanked, as well as billions of dollars of additional taxpayer dollars, if the Iraqi parliament may have a chance to consider this agreement that the United States Congress would not.

I currently have legislation requiring Congress to have an opportunity to consider such an agreement before it is signed, and I

would urge you to submit such an agreement to Congress for full consideration.

General Petraeus, I know that in this March 14 interview with the Washington Post, you stated that no one—and those are your words—no one in the United States or Iraqi Governments feels there has been sufficient progress, by any means, in the area of national reconciliation, or in the provision of basic public services. Those are exactly the concerns that my colleagues and I raised when you testified before us in September.

I remember well your being asked how long would we continue to commit American lives and treasure if the Iraqis fail to make political gains. In response, you said that if we reach that point in a year, you would have to think very hard about it. It would be difficult to recommend the continuation of this strategy, and there clearly are limits to the blood and treasure we can expend in an effort. Well, we're halfway through the year, and as many of us predicted, and as you yourself stated, we still do not see sufficient progress.

What conditions would have to exist for you to recommend to the President that the current strategy is not working? It seems apparent that you have a conditions-based analysis, as you set forth in your testimony, but the conditions are unclear. They certainly lack specificity, and the decision points, with respect to these conditions, are also vague.

So how are we to judge, General Petraeus, what the conditions are, or should be, and the actions that you and the administration would recommend pursuing based on them?

General PETRAEUS. First of all, Senator, if I could just comment on that Washington Post article. What I said was that no one was satisfied with the progress that had been made, either Iraqi or American. I then went on and actually ticked off a number of the different areas in which there had been progress, and talked about the different laws that Ambassador Crocker has rightly identified in a number of other areas that there's been progress, although not satisfactory progress, as I mentioned, in the eyes of either Iraqis or Americans.

So, that was the thrust of what I was getting at there, because there has indeed been progress in the political arena, and there actually has been progress in a variety of the other arenas, as Ambassador Crocker laid out in his opening statement.

With respect to the conditions, Senator, what we have is a number of factors that we will consider, by area, as we look at where we can make recommendations for further reductions beyond the reduction of the surge forces that will be complete in July. These factors are fairly clear. There's obviously an enemy situation factor. There's a friendly situation factor with respect to Iraqi forces, local governance, even economic and political dynamics, all of which are considered as the factors in making recommendations on further reductions.

Having said that, I have to say, it's not a mathematical exercise, there's not an equation in which you have coefficients in front of each of these factors. It's not as mechanical as that. At the end of the day, it really involves commanders sitting down, also with their Iraqi counterparts and leaders in a particular area, and assessing

where it is that you can reduce your forces, so that you can make a recommendation to make further reductions.

That's the process, there is this issue and in a sense this term of battlefield geometry. As I mentioned, together with Ambassador Crocker and Iraqi political leaders, there's even sort of a political-military calculus that you have to consider in establishing where the conditions are met and make further reductions.

Senator CLINTON. If I could just ask one follow-on question, Mr. Chairman?

In response to a question by Senator Levin regarding when you knew of Prime Minister Maliki's plans to go into Basrah, you said, and I was struck by it so I wrote it down, that you learned of it in a meeting where the meeting's purpose was planning to resource operations in Basrah on a longer-term basis.

Clearly, until relatively recently, Southern Iraq has not been within our battlefield geometry. Southern Iraq was originally the responsibility of the British. They have clearly pulled back and were not, so far as I can glean from the press reports, very actively involved in the most recent operations.

What did you mean by the resources you were planning to deploy, and over what length of time?

General PETRAEUS. Senator, what we had been working on with the Iraqi National Security Advisor, Ministers of Defense and Interior, was a plan that was being developed by the commander of the Basrah Operational Command, General Mohan, which was a fairly deliberate process of adding to the resources there on the military side and other areas. Then there was a phased plan over the course of a number of months, during which different actions were going to be pursued.

Prime Minister Maliki assessed that that plan was taking too long, determined that the threats that had emerged since provincial Iraqi control, in terms of the criminal elements connected to the militia and so forth, were such that more immediate action was taken. As a sovereign country's leader, commander in chief of his armed forces, he decided to direct the much more rapid deployment of forces from other locations to Basrah. That is what he did. He moved up the timetable and compressed the different activities that we had been planning to resource over time.

Senator LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Clinton.

Senator Martinez.

Senator MARTINEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, thank you very much for your excellent service to our country. I also want to remark how dramatic a difference it is today, and the reports that you bring us, General Petraeus, from what we had seen when we were last together here in September.

I think it's undeniable that dramatic, significant progress has been made, particularly as it relates to al Qaeda. For that I think you both should be strongly commended, and we thank you.

Ambassador Crocker, if I may follow up on the SOFA, I would like to just have you explain to the committee, first of all, it isn't your prerogative about what course this follows in terms of whether it comes to Congress or not. Is that not correct?

Ambassador CROCKER. Senator, it would depend on the elements of the agreement.

Senator MARTINEZ. In fact, these are routinely done between the United States and allied countries where we may have forces stationed?

Ambassador CROCKER. Yes, sir. There are more than 80 of them, and as the chairman noted, only the NATO SOFA has gone before the Senate because of the special commitments that we undertook in that.

Senator MARTINEZ. So other than NATO, these do not necessarily, or ever, come before the Senate? So, in other words, it's nothing unusual for this one not to come before the Senate, because others do not, as well?

Ambassador CROCKER. That is correct, sir.

Senator MARTINEZ. Let me ask you, if I may, about the diplomatic interaction with Iran. I know that I continue to be concerned, as I know you are, about their involvement. The December 18 talks have been suspended or postponed; can you tell us about the status of those potential conversations with Iran going into the future?

Ambassador CROCKER. Several days ago, the Iraqi Foreign Ministry announced that they were working on arrangements for another round of talks. We have indicated to the Iraqi Government previously that we would be prepared to participate in such talks, at the request of the Iraqi Government, and if, in the judgment of the Iraqi Government, they might possibly improve the security situation.

So, as it stands now, the Government of Iraq is making efforts to see if it can schedule something, and if they can, we'll be there.

Senator MARTINEZ. But the Government of Iran seems to be a little reticent to engage in these talks. Is that what I hear from you?

Ambassador CROCKER. Yes, sir. We've been through a number of efforts since December, as you point out, and each time something seems to get in the way of the Iranian schedulers.

Senator MARTINEZ. I know for a long time we've talked about the need for us to engage and talk to Iran. I guess it's difficult to talk to someone who doesn't want to talk back, or whose actions may not be in good faith. In that regard, General Petraeus, you mentioned earlier about 107-millimeter rockets that were being fired upon the international zone in Baghdad. Do we have any idea where the insurgent groups in Iraq are getting these 107-millimeter rockets to fire?

General PETRAEUS. They come from Iran, Senator. As I mentioned, we have found large numbers of them in weapons caches. We recently, in fact, just south of Baghdad found 45 more in a single weapons cache that also had several thousands of pounds of explosives in it.

They have come from Iran, there's no question about it, and we have individuals in detention who have explained the entire process that goes on with the Special Groups—how they are brought over there, how they are recruited, trained, how they are funded—and we've captured one of the senior heads of the Special Groups, and a number of other of their leaders and financiers, all of whom were supported by the Iranian Quds Force. We also have members of the Quds Force in detention.

Senator MARTINEZ. So they are participating—the Quds Force from Iran—in recruitment, training, and financing, all but the exe-

cution, and I suppose even in some instances, maybe, the execution of attacks upon our forces, as well?

General PETRAEUS. I can't speak to the execution directly, there's a clear sense that there has been direction of attacks, and of dialing up and dialing down at different times.

Senator MARTINEZ. Now, we've heard some discussion recently in the media that perhaps Iran had a role in the truce, as it was called, in Basrah in recent days. Can you comment on that?

Ambassador CROCKER. Senator, there has been speculation I would have to say, honestly, I simply don't know. I think the statement by Muqtada al-Sadr can be explained in Iraqi terms, just as his original cease-fire announcement in August and its renewal in February were.

I think that he and the other members of the Sadr political trend are as aware as anyone that the Jaish al-Mahdi Special Groups activities, politically, did not play to their advantage at all. What we've maybe seen through this statement, and through some of his subsequent actions and statements, is an effort to distance himself from those extremist elements. I think that would make sense.

The Sadr movement, in its inception, touched a deep vein in Iraq. It was populist, it was Iraqi nationalists, and it was Arab nationalists. It's kind of lost its moorings somewhat in recent years, with this gravitation toward Iran. What we may be seeing now—if you're explaining this in Iraqi terms—is an effort to move away from the Iranian-backed, and I would say controlled, Special Groups and move back into the Iraqi political forum. I would certainly hope that's the case.

Senator MARTINEZ. My time is up, but I would like to just close with a comment that some would suggest that we should withdraw troops from Iraq so that we might send them to Afghanistan. I would really prefer to see our NATO partners pick up their share of the load in Afghanistan, rather than just shift our troops from one country to another.

Thank you both very much. I admire greatly the work that you're doing.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Martinez.

Senator Pryor.

Senator PRYOR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me start, if I may, General Petraeus with one of your charts. We have it on page 10 of our packet, where you show several bar graphs here. One thing I noticed immediately is the national police do not have any operational readiness assessment 1 (ORA–1) units. Also, I noticed that with the military, really, if you look at it, the green, the Level 1 and Level 2 areas have not grown much, maybe a little bit. In fact it looks like the green maybe is a little smaller, and the yellow is a little larger than it was as little over a year ago.

I would expect that we would see more progress on the military front in these categories. Why haven't we seen more progress?

General PETRAEUS. There's actually a very simple explanation for that, Senator. When a unit gets to ORA–1 level, which means that it meets certain goals in terms of personnel fill, leader fill, vehicles, maintenance, training, and a variety of other categories, the Iraqis tend to take leaders from these organizations and use them to form

new organizations. Mathematically, then, they just fall below the level that is required to meet the criteria for ORA–1.

That does not mean that unit may not be in the lead. The fact that a unit may not have entire fill of its leaders is not at all uncommon in Iraq because there is a shortage of commissioned and noncommissioned officers, in particular. That's the toughest part of growing a force as rapidly as they have, is finding qualified commissioned and noncommissioned officers.

Senator PRYOR. Is that how you would recommend to them that they do, that they peel their leaders off of their best units?

General PETRAEUS. I actually think it does make sense, Senator. They're not trying to mathematically get to ORA–1, they're trying to get as many units as they can that are reasonably capable. I think that is a sensible way to do that.

Now, they do have very high-end units that are exceedingly capable, arguably the best counterterrorist forces in the region, certainly the most experienced. I'm not sure, by the way, all of them meet ORA–1. They may not meet all of the mathematical criteria, but they are certainly extremely good. They as well will take leaders from that to form other new elements.

Senator PRYOR. Let me ask about another one of your charts. This is the caches found and cleared, which I think is a great chart. Generally, I think that's very good news, however, I do have a question. When you see this big up-tick in the number of caches found and cleared, it's great that we're finding them, that's great—but does it also mean that there's just more weapons flooding into Iraq than we've ever seen before?

General PETRAEUS. That may be a factor, but I think the bigger factor, Senator, is that we were in areas where we were not present before. If you look at that chart, you can see the progression, as we cleared certain areas, for example, southeast, southwest of Baghdad, Anbar Province, Diyala Province, and a number of areas where we had either little presence or no sustained presence and there was no ISF presence.

As we have gone into those areas, as we have, in a sense, reliberated some of these areas from al Qaeda or other extremist elements, the people have actually told us where these weapons were, because they don't want them in their communities.

Senator PRYOR. Let me ask you about Iran. Iran's come up in several contexts here at this hearing, one of those is providing weapons. We've heard about them providing training, even training trainers who can go in and be insurgents or be terrorists inside Iraq. Iran should be a concern to all Americans, because Iran is not our friend. If Iran continues to have a great influence in Iraq, we may end up at the end of the day with an Iraq that is not our friend, as well. So, I think we need to be very, very careful about Iran.

Let me ask about Muqtada al-Sadr. I understand he has very close ties inside Iran. I've read somewhere where he's trying to attain the status of Ayatollah, and he's been doing some study in Iran. I read recently where, when the Iraqi Government asked him to disband his militias if they wanted to participate in the political process there, he said he would have to talk to clerics. I got the impression those were clerics inside Iraq and inside Iran.

General PETRAEUS. In Iraq, sir. In Najaf.

Senator PRYOR. My concern with him—and maybe I'm reading too much into some of these stories I've been reading—but is he trying to set himself up as the future Ayatollah of Iraq?

Ambassador CROCKER. Senator, virtually the entire year that I've been in Iraq, he has been in Iran. It's one of the reasons I spoke earlier about some confusion, it seems to me, within the Sadr Trend, as to what it actually stands for and where it's going.

He has clearly a very concrete association with Iran now through his presence there, and his religious studies in the city of Qom. Then of course the Iranian connection to the Jaish al-Mahdi Special Groups is now undeniable.

None of this, as I look at it, contributes at all to the receptivity within Iraq of the Sadr Trend. So, it would seem to me that if he is seeking a future in Iraq, given the roots of this movement, going back to the 1990s, as I said, as a populist Iraqi and Arab nationalist movement, he certainly doesn't seem to be going about it in the right way.

Senator PRYOR. General Petraeus, one last question. You've requested that Congress support a supplemental appropriation for Iraq, and I will do that, by the way. Hasn't Congress given you everything you've asked, and the military everything you've asked, for Iraq?

General PETRAEUS. It certainly has, Senator. As I made a point, earlier, of specifically thanking you for the MRAP vehicles, especially, for the ISR and for a number of other cases. With respect to the CERP, it was merely the urgency of having that by June, because that is a hugely important enabler for our commanders and troopers on the battlefield.

Senator PRYOR. Thank you.

General PETRAEUS. Thank you, sir.

Senator PRYOR. Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Pryor.

Senator Wicker.

Senator WICKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, gentlemen, for your testimony.

It's been pointed out by previous questioners, the dramatic difference that has occurred in Iraq since the surge began, and since you last made your presentation to Congress. There's no question that the situation is better now. It's better than when the surge began, and it's better than in September. It would take a major suspension of disbelief to conclude otherwise, to conclude that things are not much improved.

Your testimony has been very measured and honest. According to what we're told, progress is fragile but it is undeniable and in large part, I would say to the efforts of you two gentlemen who have testified today.

The question now before this Congress and this country is, do we proceed with this proven strategy of success? Or, on the other hand, in the face of this demonstrated progress, do we leave with our goals still not yet attained and secured?

I think history would view this Congress as very foolish if we leave now and refuse to embrace the success that we've seen.

I appreciate, General Petraeus, that you emphatically said that our efforts in Iraq are worth it. I think the American people need to be told that. As Senator Warner put the question in a somewhat different nuance; is our effort in Iraq helping to provide security for Americans where we live today?

I understood your answer to be yes, yes it is. I would simply point out that depriving al Qaeda of a major victory indeed does promote the security of Americans here at home. Protecting American credibility also protects American security here at home. It is very much in our national security interest to show that America stands behind its friends and that America stands behind its word.

So we're unanimous, also, in our appreciation and thanks for the troops. I appreciate the chairman and the ranking member starting off in that vein, and I think that's been echoed by every member of the committee.

I was told that the average age of a combat soldier in Iraq is about 20 years old. General, is that pretty much correct?

General PETRAEUS. That sounds about right to me, yes, Senator.

Senator WICKER. When I was given that fact, it struck me what that means. That means that basically, most of these 20-year-olds made the decision to participate in this war around 2006. That was at a time when our prospects in Iraq were at their lowest. That was at a time when public opinion and public support for our involvement in this effort were at their lowest.

So it makes it all the more remarkable that these young people would step forward and volunteer during that timeframe. It just makes me consider them actually, in the tradition of Abraham Lincoln, who persevered with the war effort at a time when public opinion was against him, or in the tradition of George Washington, who never really had more support than one-third of the colonists during our effort for American independence. It makes me really proud of the sense of history that these young Americans must have, if they're willing—at a time when public opinion is really against it—to step forward and say, "We believe in this effort."

So, if you could—and this will be, I think, the only question I'll have time to ask you in light of the time I've taken as a preface—please give us a profile of these troops, General? What motivates them to enlist? After they've been over there, and they have an opportunity to get out, what motivates them to reenlist? Are they watching us today? Do some of them have an opportunity to listen to this telecast? What do they want to hear from us? What do they want to hear from the elected representatives of the American people?

General PETRAEUS. Senator, first I've mentioned on a number of occasions that I believe Tom Brokaw had it right when he was with us one day in the early part of Iraq when, after spending some time out seeing the myriad tasks that our troopers are performing, he said that, "This is surely the new greatest generation." I think that subsequent deployments and deployments and deployments have underscored the validity of that assessment.

I think the members of this force enlist for the usual reasons that soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, coast guardsman have raised their right hand as civilians to become servicemembers. They enlist to do something that's bigger than self. It's certainly a

sense of patriotism, the desire to better themselves, to seek opportunities that are possible to them serving in uniform.

In combat, I think that they serve most of all for the trooper on their left and right, and feel very privileged that that individual is a fellow American soldier, coalition soldier, and in some cases, Iraqi soldier.

But this concept of the brotherhood of the close fight is a very, very special feeling. It's a very unique fraternity, if you will, and it is something that all who have experienced, I think, are changed in a way for it.

It is one of the reasons that they have raised their right hand again. As I mentioned, the 3rd Infantry Division there right now on its third tour in Iraq, has already achieved its reenlistment goal for the entire fiscal year.

So, for all of those reasons, you find the explanation of why someone originally raises his or her right hand, and why they do it again. Knowing the sacrifice, knowing the idea that you enlist the soldier and reenlist the family, the families do sacrifice very, very much.

It's not just our troopers who are watching, and they do have an opportunity to watch, and they do, by the way, watch this, I guess more than I thought they would. Because in an email world, you'd be amazed at the number of emails that you get—you probably would not—but I get emails from a number of members of the Multi-National Force-Iraq of all ranks. There's feedback, oftentimes, from these kinds of sessions.

You ask, what do they want? They just want the American people to appreciate what they're doing, to support their service, and to ensure that they and their families will be looked after in an adequate fashion.

As I mentioned in my opening statement, the support of the American public has been absolutely wonderful, and we are all very grateful to all American citizens, to Congress, to the executive branch, and others for repeatedly showing how much they do appreciate the great service of these young men and women of what I think really is the new greatest generation.

Thank you.

Senator WICKER. Please convey to them our heartfelt appreciation, and also to their families.

General PETRAEUS. I will, sir.

Senator WICKER. Thank you, gentlemen.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Wicker.

Senator McCaskill.

Senator MCCASKILL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me, obviously, comment on the sacrifice that both of you are making and the thousands other men and women like you that are working on behalf of our country in Iraq. Let me also mention the 76 Missourians and their families who have paid the ultimate sacrifice.

I'd like to focus a minute on the financial sacrifice of our country. It is a burr in the saddle of the American people that the Iraqi Government has a budget surplus, and we have a massive budget deficit. Yet we are paying and they are not.

I'd like to focus in on the SOFA for you, Ambassador Crocker.

For you, General Petraeus, I'd like to focus in on the Sons of Iraq. The Sons of Iraq is one of your charts today, and the success that you have had related to employing some 90,000 Sunnis with American tax dollars——

General PETRAEUS. Shiite and——

Senator MCCASKILL. Excuse me, Shiite and Sunni, but primarily Sunni.

General PETRAEUS. It's about 20 percent Shiite, and about 80 percent, or so, Sunni.

Senator MCCASKILL. Okay. The 80 percent, they are viewed as primarily a Sunni group, in regards to the politics in Iraq, and that's the point I want to make is that we're spending about $200 million a year, paying these people twice the average salary you would make in Iraq, and I'm trying to figure out how we get the Iraqi Government to pay that price, as opposed to the American taxpayer.

Obviously, there was a quote in the Washington Post not long ago from one of these Sons of Iraq that said that they were late in getting their money. They're going to be patient, but if they don't get their money quickly, they'll suspend and quit, and then they'll go back to fighting Americans.

So, we have paid these folks and they are not fighting us, but the question is, how long are we going to be paying them in order to keep them from fighting us? What chances do we have of making the Iraqi Government use some of their budget surplus to fight them?

For you, Ambassador Crocker, in Japan, Korea, and Germany, which has been referenced in political circles as to our involvement in Iraq long-term, in our agreements there, they are offsetting the costs of our bases. Those countries are paying the American Government to offset some of the costs of our bases. Are you going to negotiate in the SOFA, that the Iraqi Government start offsetting some of the costs of our temporary bases, that is envisioned that are going to become theirs, if and when we ever get out of there?

General PETRAEUS. Senator, on the Sons of Iraq, as I mentioned in my opening statement, we actually fund those with the CERP, and in fact, the Iraqi Government just allocated $300 million for us to manage as Iraqi CERP. That will offset a number of our other projects and allow us to focus more on the Sons of Iraq, for which they have committed now $163 million to gradually assume their contracts, over $500 million for small business loans that can be applied to some of these, and nearly $200 million for training and education and reintegration programs.

So there are a number of initiatives ongoing with the Iraqi Government, in addition to the absorption of 20, 30 percent—we'll have to see how much it is over time—of the Sons of Iraq into the legitimate ISFs, either into local police, or in some cases into the Iraqi Army.

This started in Anbar Province and that's where we have been most advanced in terms of moving them into the roles. It is much more challenging, I think understandably so, as you mentioned, primarily a Sunni organization particularly at the outset because, of course, we needed them in areas where al Qaeda was originally, which were Sunni areas. When they moved into locations such as

in Baghdad neighborhoods, where we saw the Awakening take place in some of those neighborhoods, then you're near Shiite/Sunni fault lines. Then you have much more concern, I think, legitimately on the part of a Shiite-led government.

They've worked their way through that, there were recently several thousand who were picked up on contract and then transitioned into the ISFs.

So, that process is underway and I think we're seeing more and more burden-sharing, cost-sharing, if you will, and they have committed that they would provide more, as their own supplementals are addressed over the course of the next several months.

Ambassador CROCKER. Senator, the SOFA talks are just getting underway, and I believe this committee, among others, will be receiving a briefing in the near future.

It's an interesting point. We'll need to take that aboard and see what might be possible.

Senator MCCASKILL. I think it's tremendously important, Ambassador, that we make a good-faith effort to begin to force the Iraqi Government to start spending their money to support the temporary bases that we have in Iraq. There's no excuse that the people of Japan and Germany and Korea are helping pay, and the people of Iraq need to be doing the same thing.

If they refuse to, I think that would be a very illuminating point for the American people. If they're not willing to pay for that which we have said will be theirs when we leave, then I think that would be a very interesting moment of recognition for Americans as to how we are actually viewed in the country of Iraq.

Let me also, just briefly, get your take on the Basrah situation. It is my understanding, and I don't think this has really been distilled down for most Americans, that really, Sadr won politically, in terms of the confrontation in Basrah, that their willingness to do reconciliation was being played from a winning hand, not from a losing hand. This was about the political power of Maliki versus Sadr, and that he won; not Maliki. That it was really one of these moments where Maliki could not deliver any kind of crushing blow to Sadr, and that they really, the Mahdi Army stood down because they had done the political damage they needed to do to Maliki. Is that incorrect?

Ambassador CROCKER. Senator, I would actually give it a different reading.

What we've seen since the events in Basrah is very broad-ranging political support in Iraq for Maliki. I had mentioned, in response to a previous question, that last Saturday a group called the Political Council for National Security—this is a body that includes the President, the two Vice Presidents, Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Speaker and Deputy Speakers of parliament, and leaders of all of the parliamentary blocks—met and came out with a strong statement of support for the government. There were 15 points, but the most important were: support for the government in its fight against extremist militia groups; a call for the disbanding of all such groups; and a strong statement calling on outsiders to cease interfering in Iraq's affairs, a clear reference to Iran.

So this is still a process in evolution. But, the way I would read it right now is that it has definitely strengthened support for Maliki, as he is perceived as prepared to go into action against extremist Shiite, as well as al Qaeda and others.

Senator MCCASKILL. I appreciate that there is some support for Maliki. Is it completely wrong to say that in terms of the actual incidents that occurred in Basrah, that Sadr ended up with a stronger hand than Maliki at the end of the day?

Ambassador CROCKER. Again, Senator, it's a complex situation that still has to play out. My read at this time of the positions that Muqtada al-Sadr has taken is that he is trying to put some distance between himself and these Jaish al-Mahdi Special Groups.

Senator MCCASKILL. Right.

Ambassador CROCKER. Because, there has been a pretty sharp negative—not only political, but popular—reaction against these militia groups. So I think he's motivated, trying to say, "it isn't us."

Senator MCCASKILL. Okay, thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator McCaskill.

Senator Chambliss.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, again we just can't overstate the fact of how much we appreciate your service to America.

General Petraeus, I've had the privilege of visiting with you any number of times in theater, and each time, irrespective of what the challenge that is ahead of you, you've responded in a very professional way, a way in which makes us all proud to be an American.

Ambassador Crocker, it's refreshing to know that there are folks like you who are career diplomats, and you have a number of them under your leadership, that are performing such a valuable service in this particular time of crisis.

To both of you and your families, we just thank you for a great job.

I'm particularly impressed, too, General Petraeus, at your comments on the 3rd Infantry Division. We're obviously looking forward to those folks returning to Fort Stewart and to Fort Benning, and what a great job they've done over there. From the very first day of the beginning of this conflict, they were there and they continue to perform magnificently.

I noticed in your statements, compared to what you talked about when you were here in September, the percentage of time that you've spent on military operations versus the time that you spend on what's happening on the governmental side and the civilian side is remarkably different.

When you were here in September, we were primarily talking about an update on the military perspective, and what had happened, and where we're going.

Now, thank goodness, we're here listening to you talk about the improvements that have been made on the Iraqi civilian side. If that's not encouraging to every American, then they just have not been listening to what's been going on in this conflict.

I want to focus for a minute, General Petraeus, on a particular project that you have had under your jurisdiction, and it's the project where the commanders that are underneath you have had the opportunity to engage with proprietors all across Iraq, and to

make grants to those individuals, or loans, however you may want to characterize them, of up to, I think, $2,500 to put those folks back in business.

Would you talk a little bit about how that program has worked, the success of that program, and what's been the reaction, which I personally have seen from Iraqi proprietors, but what's been the overall reaction of Iraqis to the American military as a result of that program?

General PETRAEUS. Sir, it has been very positive. The small business grants—USAID does small business loans—have really primed the pump in a number of areas. As you can achieve security in an area, a lot of these are in the Multi-National Division Center area that the 3rd Infantry Division is the headquarters of. As they have cleared and then held areas, the way to start the building again, as quickly as possible, oftentimes is these very small business grants or loans.

They have been very, very successful. They obviously engender enormous goodwill, because we are already there well before the Iraqi Government can get in there and start to prime the pump with basic services, and this just starts the whole process, and it does it very, very rapidly. It is, yet again, another reason why there have been so many weapons caches found in so many different areas. They are grateful for what our soldiers are doing, and they show their gratitude in, among other ways, pointing out where IEDs are, in some cases and showing them where weapons caches are in others.

Senator CHAMBLISS. There's been some comments here this morning, and comments in the press of late by some folks, regarding whether or not this truly has been a success, this surge or the new strategy, whatever we call it, that began under your leadership a little over a year ago.

But I would note that AQI certainly is our primary enemy, they have been the focus of our attention in Iraq. What percentage of Iraq was AQI located in 2006, compared to where they are today?

General PETRAEUS. As I showed in the one slide during the opening statements, Senator, in late 2006, AQI had substantial presence, and even control in significant areas of the Euphrates River Valley through Anbar Province, in a number of the areas for which 3rd Infantry Division assumed responsibility in Multi-National Division Center, in the so-called throat of Baghdad, just south and southeast of Baghdad.

Several different major neighborhoods in Baghdad extended up the Diyala River Valley to Baqubah, beyond that, and then a variety of areas in the Tigris River Valley and then on up to Mosul in Ninawa.

Over time, the grip of AQI in a number of those areas has been reduced, and in fact, the violence in those provinces then came down very substantially, with the one exception, and that exception is Ninawa Province in the far north. That is the attention of the main effort, if you will, of the effort against AQI by conventional and Special Operations Forces on the Iraqi and the coalition side.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Another measuring stick, I think, is the participation of Iraqi citizens alongside our coalition forces in defending their country and prosecuting attacks against AQI.

Have we seen an increase in the percentage of Iraqi citizens participating in the prosecution of the conflict against AQI versus where we were in 2006?

General PETRAEUS. We have very much, Senator. Again, a lot of this started in late 2006, with the first Sheikh and tribe sort of courageously saying, "Will you stand with us if we decide to stand against al Qaeda? We've had enough of the damage that they have done, we don't believe in the extremist ideology that they offer." The indiscriminate violence wrecked havoc in the Euphrates River Valley and other locations.

That was the first manifestation of this. Then over time, that built. It arguably reached critical mass in the Euphrates River Valley and the Ramadi Region. It rippled up and down that. In early to mid-2006 or 2007, Ramadi was cleared in a very substantial operation mid-March to mid-April. That just kept moving around.

It was a willingness to reject al Qaeda on the part of Sunni communities because of the damage that they had done, and a recognition that they could not share in the bounty that is Iraq. You can't win if you don't play. You can't share in the enormous resources that Iraq has, if you're not participating.

That, of course, also is why they so keenly want to see provincial elections in so many of these different communities where Sunni Arabs boycotted the vote in 2005.

Senator CHAMBLISS. My time is up, Mr. Ambassador, but could you give me a quick answer as to whether or not the Iranians are participating in the economy of Iraq, as well as from a standpoint of participating militarily?

Ambassador CROCKER. Senator, yes they are. A lot of goods move from Iran into Iraq, foodstuffs, consumer goods, and Iranians are also involved in some project development, particularly in different cities in the south.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

After we complete the first round, we will excuse our witnesses and not have a second round so that our witnesses have at least a little break before their afternoon hearing.

Senator CHAMBLISS. Mr. Chairman, may we thank you, on our side, for again, their appearance, in a very thorough hearing this morning.

Chairman LEVIN. I think we have three or four more Senators. First, Senator Webb.

Senator WEBB. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

For the record, I would like to point out then when we talk about the success in al-Anbar being sort of the greatest event from the surge, for purposes of history, we should remember that that Awakening began before the surge was announced. I know that for a fact, because my son was there as a Marine rifleman through the period of September 2006 through May 2007, and was following it with some interest as it was moving forward.

I hope I can get two questions in here during this period, but gentlemen, I'm on the Foreign Relations Committee, so we'll see how far we can go and we'll all take a lunch break and come back.

General, I'd like to thank you for the way that you characterized the service of our people in the military today. I think there's been

far too much politicizing of what our people have done. As someone who grew up in the military, served in it, and has more than one family member in it right now, I think it's fair to leave politics out of what our people are doing. There are people in the United States military today who feel one way, people that feel another way, and people who have no political views at all. Quite frankly, combat was the most apolitical environment I've ever been in. People want to work together and do their job, and I think it was really refreshing to hear you take that approach today.

I'm very concerned about the strain on the force. It isn't reflective, so much, of motivation. As you indicated, we have great people and we have a career force that continues to reenlist. It goes more to the stewardship of all of us who are making these policies, in terms of how we're using people, and how these experiences are going to impact them downstream in their lives.

On the one hand, we have reenlistment rates that are high. On the other hand, we have articles such as the one that came out in the New York Times the other day with 27 percent of the career noncommissioned officer force, that has had multiple deployments, having difficulties at some level.

That's one of the reasons that I introduced the dwell-time amendment last year, to try to put some perspective, just to put a safety net under this, while the politics of the war were being discussed. It's another reason I have introduced, and pushed so hard, this GI Bill. You mentioned, General, Tom Brokaw visiting and saying this was the next greatest generation. I think the least we can do is to give these people the same shot at a true future as we gave the so-called greatest generation, by giving them the ability to pursue education of their choice and to really have a future.

When I'm thinking about all of that and I'm looking at the numbers that we're seeing, where it looks like after this next increment of troops are allowed to go home, we're going to probably be having 10,000 more people remain in Iraq than were there at the beginning of the surge; that's what I'm seeing, anyway. We're going to have like 141,000 until this next increment is brought into place.

I start wondering how we're going to do that and still meet the demands that are outside of Iraq. When I look at the situation inside Iraq, I know, Ambassador Crocker, you mentioned that al Qaeda's capabilities in Iraq have been significantly degraded over the past year. Al Qaeda is a part of an international terrorist movement that is, by its definition, mobile. I don't think we can say that the situation with international terrorism has improved in Pakistan and Afghanistan and those areas.

You mentioned, quite correctly, that many Iraqi Shiites, in the hundreds of thousands, as you commented, stood up and fought against Iran when called upon to do so during the Iran/Iraq war. We should consider that when we work through Iranian influence in Iraq, in fact, Iraq seems well ahead of us, in terms of seeking a fuller relationship with Iran. Part of the problem from my perspective, quite frankly, has been this administration, the way that it has approached possible aggressive diplomatic relationships with Iran.

But when you look at all of that, the concern that I have is that keeping that level of force in Iraq and looking at the other situa-

tions, particularly Afghanistan; where are we going to get these people?

I'm curious, General, as to the level of agreement that you have in this plan from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff?

General PETRAEUS. Both Admiral Fallon, the then-CENTCOM commander, and the chairman were fully supportive of the recommendations that I made, and of course made through them, to the Secretary and ultimately to the President.

Senator WEBB. Thank you.

We'll be having a hearing with Admiral Mullen this week, and I would like to be able to pursue that with him.

Ambassador Crocker, with respect to the Strategic Framework Agreement, we've had two different documents that have been kind of discussed almost in a way in this hearing that people may think that it's one document, when clearly it is not.

I have a couple of questions on that. One is, I read your testimony where you say this is clearly no permanent basis, but I'm not sure, really, what that term means anymore.

Can you tell us what would have been in this document that would have elevated it to the point, that from the administration's perspective, it would have required congressional approval?

Ambassador CROCKER. Senator, I'm not a lawyer or a constitutional specialist. I am advised by those individuals, so I can't give you the whole universe of issues that might be involved, but some of them are obvious.

The kind of provision that is in the NATO SOFA, the formal security commitment, that raises that particular SOFA to the level of advice and consent by the Senate. That is not what we intend in this current exercise.

Senator WEBB. We've been trying to look at what the specific wording in the document is, and to this point, it has not been shared with us. But it's been my understanding that there is a security commitment in the agreement.

Ambassador CROCKER. No, sir, there isn't. The SOFA negotiation itself is still in its very early stages. Although we have briefed the Strategic Framework Agreement to the Iraqi leadership, we have not yet sat down for a formal discussion.

Senator WEBB. Well, that would be the document that we, in Congress, would be initially concerned with, rather than the SOFA.

I'll save this for the afternoon, because my time has run out.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Webb.

Senator Cornyn.

Senator CORNYN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus, it's good to see you again. I had the honor of visiting you and many of the Texas troops and many other men and women in uniform in January, and good to see you then, and good to see you here today.

I want to start by asking, General, the purpose of the counterinsurgency strategy, sometimes now called the surge, was to give the Iraqis the basic protection—to protect the Iraqi population and to give the Iraqi Government and the Iraqi people the chance to develop their own political arrangements, so that, as in the words of

the Iraq Study Group, we would leave them with the capacity to govern and to defend themselves.

Would you accept my summary?

General PETRAEUS. I would, Senator.

Senator CORNYN. Or maybe state it better than I did.

General PETRAEUS. No, I think that's fine, sir.

Senator CORNYN. That leads me to Ambassador Crocker, to the benchmarks. I know there's been a lot of debate, and I seem to recall some of your writing, about whether the benchmarks that the United States Government laid down in 2007 were really the appropriate measures, but let's just set that argument aside for a minute and just talk about what sort of success the Iraqi Government has had in meeting those 18 benchmarks that we identified in 2007.

It's my recollection that they have successfully completed 12 of those 18 benchmarks. Can you either correct me, or clarify and expand upon the developments in that area?

Ambassador CROCKER. I think that's about right, Senator. We're actually just going through a process now, between us out in Baghdad and folks back here, in reevaluating the status of the benchmarks. But clearly they have gained some real momentum after an admittedly slow beginning.

Amnesty is a benchmark, for example, accountability and justice, de-Baathification reform is a benchmark, provincial powers in its election dimension is a benchmark. So in the space of just a little over 1 month, we saw them achieve three really significant new benchmarks.

Senator CORNYN. General Petraeus, I remember General Odierno who, of course, has served with you in Iraq, and is Commander of III Corps in Fort Hood. Pending his nomination as Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, I remember him saying what he thought the American people wanted to see out of Iraq was progress. Progress.

Would both of you characterize what we have seen over the last year in Iraq, both from a military and security standpoint, as well as from a political reconciliation standpoint, as progress?

General PETRAEUS. I would, Senator.

Ambassador CROCKER. Yes. Yes, very much, Senator.

Senator CORNYN. I want to just ask a question about the consequences of failure in Iraq, because of course, we all want our troops to come home as soon as they can. I think, giving both sides the benefit of the doubt, I would say the disagreement is over whether it's based on a political or a timetable, which I would call political, without regard to conditions, and those of us who believe that it ought to be conditions-based reduction in our troops.

You touched on this, I believe a little bit, both of you did, in your opening statement, but I think it's worth repeating because I think the connection that, as you pointed out, General Petraeus, our troops not only want to know that we appreciate them, but I think their families and they want to understand how their sacrifice is directly connected with our safety and security here at home. Sometimes, I think that gets lost in the debates here on Capitol Hill.

Traveling to Afghanistan, as I did in January before I came to Iraq, I of course was reminded of what happened in that failed

state after the Soviet Union left, where the Taliban and al Qaeda basically used that as an opportunity to organize, train, and launch attacks, most notoriously on September 11, 2001.

So you see the consequences of a failed state in Iraq, were we to withdraw before conditions would allow it, before Iraqis could govern and defend themselves, increasing the probability that Iraq could, in fact, become a similar failed state to Afghanistan from the standpoint of allowing space, time, and opportunity for al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations to reorganize and plot and potentially export similar attacks against the United States or our allies?

General PETRAEUS. Senator, as I mentioned, not achieving our goals, our interests in Iraq indeed could lead al Qaeda to regain lost territory, we could see a resumption of the kind of ethno-sectarian violence that tore the country apart in 2006 and into early 2007.

No telling what can happen in terms of the Iranian influence piece, and then just general regional stability challenges, not to mention the connection with the global economy.

So there are enormous interests at stake, and that was why I sought to lay those out earlier.

Senator CORNYN. We recently hit 4,000 dead in Iraq as a result of armed combat, 373 of those have called Texas home, my home State. I recently went to a memorial service for a young, 24-year-old soldier named Jose Rubio, who lost his life in Iraq.

At that memorial service, as you would expect, everyone in the family was sad, and of course we all grieve with them for their loss.

But, I think his family took considerable comfort in knowing that Jose Rubio was doing something he believed in, something important, and something that contributed to the safety and security of his family back here, at home, as well as the rest of the American people.

Do you believe that young soldiers like Jose Rubio are making such a contribution to the safety and security of their families back home and the American people?

General PETRAEUS. I do, Senator.

Senator CORNYN. I thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Cornyn.

Senator Bayh.

Senator BAYH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, gentlemen, for your patience and your testimony here today, and most of all, for your service to our country. We may have some differences of opinion about the way forward in Iraq, but none us questioned your service to our country, or the candor of your testimony today. So, I'm grateful to you for that.

I have the privilege of serving on the Select Committee on Intelligence as well as the Senate Armed Services Committee, and I'm struck, when reading the most recent National Intelligence Estimate—which we can't discuss here in detail today, but both reading that and listening to your testimony here today and listening to some of the dialogue about how all of this is subject to differing interpretations.

I would just ask you the question; isn't it true that a fair amount of humility is in order in rendering judgments about the way forward in Iraq, that no one can speak with great confidence about what is likely to occur? Is that a fair observation?

General PETRAEUS. It's very fair, Senator, and it's why I have repeatedly noted we haven't turned any corners, we haven't seen any lights at the end of the tunnel. The champagne bottle has been pushed to the back of the refrigerator, and the progress, while real, is fragile and is reversible.

Senator BAYH. In fact, reasonable people can differ about the most effective way forward. Is that not also a fair observation?

General PETRAEUS. I don't know whether I would go that far, sir. Obviously, I think there is a way forward, I've made a recommendation on that, and so——

Senator BAYH. General, you would not mean to say that anyone who would have a different opinion is, by definition, an unreasonable person?

General PETRAEUS. Senator, lots of things in life are arguable, and certainly there are lots of different opinions out there. But again, I believe that the recommendations that I have made are correct.

Senator BAYH. Here's the reason for my question, gentlemen. Just as I acknowledge your honor and patriotism, which I think is absolutely appropriate, I hope you would acknowledge the honor and patriotism of those who have a look at this very complex set of facts, and simply have a different point of view. As you both are aware, some argue that, to not embrace the assessment that you're giving us, is, in fact, to embrace defeat or to embrace failure in Iraq. I simply would disagree with those characterizations, and that was the reason for my question to you.

General PETRAEUS. Senator, we fight for the right of people to have other opinions.

Senator BAYH. As we should, and so I appreciate your candor with regard to that.

So, let me ask you about some of the policies that may be subject to differing interpretations. You've been asked about all of them, I think, here.

Chairman, I've never seen so many people be glad to see me before, here, I'm the last one. I guess there's some benefits to being last.

The question of opportunity costs was raised, and in the intelligence world, at least for the foreseeable future, they tell us that we are much more likely to be subject to a terrorist strike emanating from Afghanistan, or possibly the tribal regions of Pakistan, than we are Iraq.

Yet, we are currently spending five times as much in Iraq as we are in Afghanistan on a monthly basis, we have five times as many troops stationed in Iraq as we do in Afghanistan currently. How do you square that when the threat, currently, is greater in terms of terrorist strike from one place, and yet we're devoting five times the amount of resources and troops to a different place? Some might look at that and argue that our resources are being misallocated.

Ambassador CROCKER. I'd just make a couple of observations on that, Senator, and again, as you know because you visited me, I am former Ambassador to Pakistan. I am not really in a position to speak authoritatively about conditions there, but again, the circumstances in Pakistan are such that it's not going to be a question of U.S. troops in Pakistan. The al Qaeda threat out of that border area is indeed significant.

Senator BAYH. Afghanistan and Pakistan are subjects for another day, but since this is all tied up in the global effort against extremism and terror, things have not been going as well as we would hope in Afghanistan. We're not going to have troops in Pakistan. Still, resources are finite, and they do have an impact. Some might look at this and say, "Why are we devoting five times the amount of resources to a place that is not, at this point, the principal threat?"

Ambassador CROCKER. In part, Senator, to be sure that it doesn't become that.

I noted in my testimony that Osama bin Laden fairly recently referred to Iraq as the perfect base for al Qaeda. It is a reminder of that, for al Qaeda, having a safe base on Arab soil is extremely important. They got close to that in 2006.

Senator BAYH. They apparently have one now in the tribal areas in Pakistan.

But in any event, Ambassador, I appreciate your responses, and I would only caution us to not take our marching orders from Osama bin Laden, and it might occur to some that he says these things because he wants us to respond to them in a predictable way, and we should not do that for him. But, that's another subject.

Just two or three other things, gentlemen. Again, thank you.

Ambassador, I have high regard for you. On the subject of political reconciliation, I think it is a fair comment, on my part, that the balance of the opinion in the intelligence world would not be quite as optimistic as some of the observations that have been given to us here today.

My question is; does not that, and I use the word open-ended commitment and I know that you would say our commitment is not open-ended, and yet without any sort of estimate of any kind of endpoint, I don't know how else you define it, in some ways, enable some of the political dysfunction we have in Iraq, by basically saying, "We're there as long as it takes, we're going to invest as much money as it takes." Does that not take some of the impetus off of them to make the hard compromises that only they could make?

Ambassador CROCKER. Again, I am the first to say, going back to your initial comments, that Iraq is both hard and it's complicated. In this particular aspect, it's my judgment based on the year that I've been there, that we get political progress when Iraqi political leaders and figures are feeling more secure, rather than less, that they are more likely to make the kinds of deals and compromises that we saw in February with that legislative package, when they and their communities do not feel threatened.

It would be my concern that, if they were to sense that we're moving away from a conditions-based approach in our presence and our actions, that they would then be kind of looking over our heads

to what might possibly happen next without us there. They'd be moving away from compromise, not toward it.

Senator BAYH. Chairman, I just have two brief questions if I could be permitted.

General, my question to you is, I've asked this directly of some of our leading experts in the intelligence arena, and my question was, on a global net basis, is our presence in Iraq creating more extremists and terrorists than we are eliminating within Iraq?

The answer they have given me is that they believe that we are actually creating more than we are eliminating. Creating more on a global basis then we're eliminating in Iraq. What would your response to that be?

General PETRAEUS. I'm not sure I would agree to that, Senator, but my responsibilities are Iraq, not the greater global responsibilities. Obviously, I'm a four-star general, I have strategic thoughts, and again, I would just differ with that particular assessment.

I think at this point that we have rolled back, as I mentioned, AQI in a number of different areas. The Ambassador rightly pointed out that Osama bin Laden and Zawahiri have repeatedly pointed out in various forms of communication, not just those for the open world, that Iraq is the central front of their global war of terror. In that regard, I think that is where we must roll them back.

Senator BAYH. My final question, gentlemen, is this. I noticed, and Senator McCain is no longer here, it was his opinion that success, I think, in his words, "was within reach." Another quote was, "success would come sooner than many imagine."

Now, I don't want to get you sucked into the Presidential campaign and ask you to respond to that directly, but many Americans are going to look at your testimony here today and all of this proceeding in these questions. They're asking themselves, "What does all this mean about the way forward? Is success truly almost at hand, or is this a commitment without end?"

So, my final question to you would be, is it not possible to at least offer some rough estimate about when we will be able to, after this brief pause, recommence extricating ourselves by withdrawing more troops from Iraq, down to some longer-term level? Is it just impossible to offer any rough estimate?

General PETRAEUS. Senator, if you believe as I do, and the commanders on the ground believe that the way forward on reductions should be conditions-based and it is just flat not responsible to try to put down a stake in the ground, and say, "this is when it will be or that is when it will be," with respect.

Senator BAYH. I understand that, General. Many Americans will listen to that and believe this to be an open-ended commitment because by definition, we won't know until we get there, and there have been so many ups and downs in this thing. I think it's a fair estimate to say that when this began, most did not assume that we'd be sitting here 5 years on with the conditions that we currently have.

So, again, I'm just trying to give the American people a fair judgment about where we stand and what the likely way forward is, and I guess the best answer to that is, we'll know when we get there and we don't know when we're going to get there.

General PETRAEUS. Senator, as I just said, we have, we believe the appropriate way, based on the military commanders on the ground, to sustain and build on the progress that has been achieved over the course of the last 12 or 15 months, is to make reductions when the conditions allow you to do that, without unduly risking all that we've fought so hard to achieve.

Senator BAYH. We don't know when that point will be.

General PETRAEUS. Senator, when the conditions are met is when that point is. Again, that's the way that lays out. Unless you want to risk and jeopardize what our young men and women have fought so hard to achieve over the last 12 or 15 months, then we need to go with a conditions-based approach. That's why I made that recommendation, obviously.

Senator BAYH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General, I would just conclude by, I understand your position, I know why you take the position you do. You can understand the position that leaves the American people in as they try and assess the way forward.

Thank you, gentlemen.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Bayh.

Gentlemen, it's been a long morning for you. We appreciate your service and your appearance here today.

We will stand adjourned.

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR CARL LEVIN

TREATMENT OF DETAINEES

1. Senator LEVIN. General Petraeus, in a letter to the military personnel in Multi-National Force-Iraq on May 10, 2007, you wrote in part that "Some may argue that we would be more effective if we sanctioned torture or other expedient methods to obtain information from the enemy. They would be wrong."

If a soldier in Iraq had reason to believe that a detainee in his custody had information about an impending attack on the soldier's unit, and the soldier thought that gaining that information could save the lives of his fellow soldiers, would military necessity allow him to use interrogation techniques that would otherwise not be permitted under the Geneva Conventions?

General PETRAEUS. Military necessity does not allow a soldier to use interrogation techniques not authorized by the Geneva Conventions. Article 27 of Geneva Convention IV requires that Protected Persons/Civilian Internees "shall at all times be treated humanely" by the Protecting Power. This requirement is an extension of the standards that must be applied to an Enemy Prisoner of War under Article 13 of Geneva Convention III.

While the Geneva Conventions does not detail an explicit list of what constitutes humane or inhumane treatment, the Department of the Army Field Manual 2–22.3 details approved interrogation approaches that do not violate the humane treatment standard. Soldiers must follow this field manual under all circumstances.

AIRBORNE INTELLIGENCE, SURVEILLANCE, AND RECONNAISSANCE

2. Senator LEVIN. General Petraeus, in your statement you mentioned shortfalls in airborne intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities. Are these capabilities urgently needed?

General PETRAEUS. ISR platforms are essential to our operations, as persistent surveillance is required to identify, track, target, and kill or capture insurgents, and to minimize friendly force and civilian casualties. Congress and Secretary Gates have been staunch supporters of our ISR requirements, and the resources we have received have been critical to the success of our commanders.

Despite this support, however, we still have unmet requirements and additional capabilities are urgently needed. Shortfalls in ISR decrease our ability to conduct multiple, simultaneous operations and therefore may diminish our ability to main-

tain our hard-won momentum. We also expect ISR requirements in Iraq to increase rather than decrease in the near-term as Iraqi forces assume more responsibility for security and a smaller coalition force continues to transition from leading, to partnering, to an ISR-intensive overwatch role. Despite the growing capability of the Iraqi security forces (ISFs), the Iraqis do not yet have the ISR platforms they would need to be able to conduct fully independent operations across Iraq. I am working closely on these issues with Program Analysis and Evaluation Director Brad Berkson who directs the ISR Task Force for Secretary Gates. Director Berkson's most recent set of recommendations of actions to increase ISR is very encouraging. I am also working with another ISR Task Force overseen by Director Berkson to help identify and prioritize the needs in the ISR arena to support conventional forces over the longer term.

3. Senator LEVIN. General Petraeus, the Department of Defense (DOD) has taken many actions to accelerate and surge all available unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) systems to meet Central Command's (CENTCOM) requirements for additional surveillance aircraft. Despite this surge, a substantial shortfall remains, which will not be filled for some time. From your perspective, is it necessary to wait until the UAV systems, such as Predator, Warrior, and Shadow, can meet the expanded requirement or would CENTCOM prefer that the requirement be met as soon as possible with small manned aircraft?

General PETRAEUS. Our desire is to meet ISR shortfalls as quickly as possible. Together with CENTCOM, we are approaching the ISR problem from a holistic point of view and are concerned less with the air vehicle itself than with how the air vehicle fits into the larger ISR system-of-systems to achieve desired effects. Comprehensive solutions are required, and these must take into account the platform's support infrastructure; sensor capabilities; communications bandwidth; and processing, exploitation, and dissemination architectures. It is also valuable to have a variety of systems which enable the flexibility in employment our operations require.

Small manned aircraft acquired from the commercial sector are already being employed to help fill the ISR platform shortage, and we will continue to take advantage of such options where they make sense. They are not, however, the complete answer to our ISR shortfalls, and we are working with the Office of the Secretary of Defense ISR Task Force to determine which platforms are most effective in meeting our ISR needs.

4. Senator LEVIN. General Petraeus, if a large number of small manned aircraft were acquired to temporarily fill this operational need until the UAV systems become available, what might be done with the manned aircraft when CENTCOM no longer needs them?

General PETRAEUS. Although we currently have a shortfall in ISR assets in Iraq, should we reach the point when particular assets become unnecessary, I would advise my chain of command regarding the availability of those assets. Though I understand that there are also shortfalls in ISR elsewhere in CENTCOM's area of responsibility, decisions on the employment of ISR assets outside of Iraq are beyond my brief as the Multi-National Force-Iraq Commander. I would defer to those who have better visibility on, and the responsibility for, our worldwide ISR requirements.

5. Senator LEVIN. General Petraeus, might the manned aircraft be good candidates to provide to Iraqi forces for intelligence support?

General PETRAEUS. As we advise and support the development of ISR capability in the ISFs, we seek to focus on Iraqi requirements rather than specific platforms. As with our own posture, comprehensive solutions are required. Given the nascent state of Iraqi ISR capabilities, issues of particular concern include a given platform's support infrastructure and training requirements.

Small, manned aircraft may be part of the solution to Iraq's ISR needs, and, in fact, the ISR platforms currently in use by the Iraqis are of this type. In decisions about the procurement of additional capabilities, much will depend on the characteristics of specific systems and the extent to which these characteristics meet Iraqi needs.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR DANIEL K. AKAKA

MUQTADA AL-SADR

6. Senator AKAKA. General Petraeus, the recent violent activity in Basra under the direction of Shiite leader Muqtada al-Sadr, and the apparent inability of ISFs

to confront his militias effectively, are of great concern to me. Of even greater concern is how quickly the violence was reduced once al-Sadr ordered them to lay down their arms. To what degree does al-Sadr control the overall level of violence in the country, since it would appear to most of us that his word, and not the presence of increased numbers of U.S. forces on the ground, is what defines a week of increased bloodshed and insecurity?

General PETRAEUS. The Sadrist ceasefires have indeed contributed to a reduction in violence in Iraq, but they came after their militia took serious losses from combat with the ISFs and coalition forces. Of greater long-term importance than al-Sadr's decisions themselves, therefore, are the factors that led him to declare the ceasefires. One of the primary factors has been the intense pressure on Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) and the Special Groups (SG). Iraqi-led, coalition-enabled forces have targeted criminal militias and their mafia-like activity, and Iraqi leaders have demonstrated their willingness to take on militias. Recent, ongoing operations in Basra and Sadr City have proven exceedingly lethal to JAM/SG members; over 770 JAM/SG members were killed in and around Sadr City alone. Iraqi and coalition forces' activity in large part compelled Sadr's decision to lay down arms. Another important factor in Sadr's decisions is his need for support from the base of the Shiite Sadrist movement. Atmospherics in Basra and Sadr City indicate that most residents were tired of the violence and of the militia's mafia-like activities and desired a return to normalcy. Sadr's decisions to lay down arms in both locales were in part acknowledgments of this trend toward the popular rejection of violence (a trend that Iran, whose Qods Force funds, trains, and equips the militia Special Groups, also recognized). Indeed, many leaders of the Sadrist movement are increasingly leaning toward participation in the political process as a way to give voice to the legitimate concerns of the poor, urban, disenfranchised Shiite that they represent.

IRAQI GOVERNMENT

7. Senator AKAKA. Ambassador Crocker, there has been a lot of criticism of the Iraqi Government for not doing enough in terms of taking responsibility for the future of their country. Their demonstrated inability to effectively allocate their budget resources to address reconstruction and provide essential services, and their failed efforts to diplomatically engage the various factions within the country and bring about reconciliation, are two of the major concerns. Given what we did not fully understand prior to the 2003 invasion about the cultural divides within Iraq, would you say that we have expected too much from the Maliki Government?

Ambassador CROCKER. Iraq's leaders have many difficult problems to tackle, and it will take time to resolve them. We must not underestimate the ongoing challenges posed by the gravity of the circumstances and the fragility of the security environment. Nevertheless, we believe that the Iraqi political leadership is now on the right track and has the ability to achieve the needed results. They are making important progress on national reconciliation that will be essential if Iraq is to become a stable, united, and democratic country. They can attain this goal with continued support and encouragement from us and the international community.

In the last few months, there have been significant political and security accomplishments that greatly advance the prospects for real national reconciliation. Regular meetings of the recently established Executive Council (President, Prime Minister, and both Vice Presidents) have expanded discussions on and improved prospects for consensus on key issues. There have been active efforts to bring Sunni ministers from the Tawafuq Party back into the cabinet. Prime Minister al-Maliki's security campaigns in Basrah and Sadr City garnered widespread political and popular support in Iraq—and also sent a positive signal to regional countries concerned about the Maliki Government's willingness to confront Shia extremists who had operated with relative impunity. The central government has channeled some $3.5 billion to the provinces, addressing a key source of sectarian tension—a fair distribution of Iraq's vast resources, including petroleum revenue—thereby strengthening provincial-central government ties.

The Iraqi Government is moving ahead on other fiscal decisions necessary to meet the Iraqi peoples' needs and improve the country's economic situation. The passing of the budget law in February, following extensive debate and compromises in the Council of Representatives, was an important milestone. The government's ability to provide essential services is improving, and we have seen improvements in the Government of Iraq's ability to allocate and spend its own financial resources on Iraq's reconstruction and security. In 2005, for example, Iraq's capital budget was $5 billion. In 2008 it is $13.1 billion with the possibility of up to $5 billion more in supplemental funds. Similarly, the Iraqi Government has increased allocations

for security ministries from $2.1 billion in 2005 to approximately $9 billion in 2008. There have been improvements in capital and security budget execution at all levels of the government.

Challenges remain and Iraqi political leaders still need to make some difficult compromises to advance the stability and prosperity essential for democracy in Iraq. Among the most important of these compromises is a package of national hydrocarbons legislation that will establish mechanisms to regulate Iraq's oil and gas sectors, as well as guidelines by which oil revenue is equitably shared. Agreement on this legislation would open the way for further reconciliation and economic development. Other complex problems that the Iraqis must tackle include resolution of the status of Kirkuk, decisions on Iraq's federal structure, and the future of refugees and internally-displaced persons.

The Iraqi Government and the people of Iraq have great expectations for their future. We and Iraq's other international partners will support them in their endeavors.

8. Senator AKAKA. Ambassador Crocker, assuming they are capable of achieving some sort of real political progress, where is the plan to put conditions on U.S. and coalition assistance and hold the Iraqis accountable for failure to reconcile their differences?

Ambassador CROCKER. We are pressing Iraqi political leaders across the board to accelerate actions necessary to promote national reconciliation—by passing legislation in key areas, completing constitutional reform, broadening participation by all of Iraq's communities in the political process, and improving the delivery of basic services. The United States and Iraq are negotiating a Strategic Framework, intended to reflect shared United States and Iraqi political, economic, and security interests going forward. International agreements like the International Compact with Iraq (ICI) promote Iraqi progress in key reconciliation-related areas like economic self-reliance, good governance, rule of law, and civil society.

Iraqi steps to promote national reconciliation are indeed essential if Iraq is to become a stable, united and democratic country. The goals are attainable with continued support and encouragement from us and the international community.

In fact, we believe that the Iraqi political leadership is now largely on the right track and that there have been significant accomplishments that greatly advance the prospects for lasting national reconciliation; specifically, these include the passage of key legislation on amnesty, the budget, de-Baathification reform, provincial powers (including setting a date for provincial elections), as well as Prime Minister al-Maliki's recent moves against illegal armed groups in Basrah and Baghdad.

In the end, the Iraqi Government is accountable to the Iraqi people, not to us. Provincial elections later this year and national elections to follow will test the government's standing with the Iraqi people. Iraq's leaders understand the urgent need to show their fellow citizens that they can govern effectively and that conditions of daily life will improve. We will continue our efforts to assist Iraqis to build the united, stable, and prosperous country they want while we recognize that progress toward this end must be made by the Iraqis themselves.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MARK PRYOR

TROOP WITHDRAWAL

9. Senator PRYOR. General Petraeus, the war in Iraq has resulted in numerous pieces of legislation calling for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq. However, one thing has remained constant in the language used by both parties: "except for military personnel needed for: (1) force protection, (2) counterinsurgency operations, and (3) training of ISFs." As the commander of the Multi-National Force-Iraq, how many troops do you think satisfy this language?

General PETRAEUS. At the present time, we have achieved the conditions to enable us to support current policy goals while drawing down to 15 U.S. Brigade Combat Teams by July 2008. Indeed we have, with our Iraqi counterparts, helped reduce the number of security incidents to levels not seen since 2004. If there were a change in policy, such that the only goals were those listed in the language above, we would undertake a comprehensive planning effort and make recommendations on appropriate force levels given the situation at that time. This planning effort would require dialogue and clarification with regard to policy objectives and acceptable risk. This planning effort would also need to take into account operational and strategic considerations.

As I stated in my testimony, operational considerations include recognition of the following: the military surge has achieved significant progress, but that progress remains fragile and uneven; ISFs have strengthened their capabilities, but still must grow further; provincial elections are expected to occur this fall; refugee returns, detainee releases, and efforts to resolve provincial boundaries disputes and Article 140 issues will be challenging; the transition of Sons of Iraq (SOI) into the ISFs or other pursuits will require time and careful monitoring; and withdrawing too many forces too quickly could jeopardize the progress of the past year.

A number of strategic considerations would also affect the planning process. These would include recognition that a number of the security challenges inside Iraq are also related to significant regional and global threats, and that a failed state in Iraq would pose serious consequences for the greater fight against al Qaeda, for regional stability, for the already existing humanitarian crisis in Iraq, and for efforts to counter malign Iranian influence. An additional strategic consideration is the fact that the strain on the U.S. military, especially on its ground forces, has been considerable in recent years.

Without dialogue and clarification regarding policy objectives and acceptable risk, and without an assessment of the relevant operational and strategic considerations at the time, only a rough estimate of force levels is possible. Nevertheless, the language above still suggests a requirement for sizable conventional forces, Special Operations Forces, and adviser elements.

FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT AND STATUS OF FORCES AGREEMENT

10. Senator PRYOR. Ambassador Crocker, in March, Admiral Fallon provided his written testimony to Congress in advance of his appearance before the committee. He stated "the United States is planning to normalize long-term bilateral relations through a framework agreement that reflects our shared political, economic, cultural, and security interests, as well as a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). The documents will allow us maximum flexibility to assist the Government of Iraq in the fight against al Qaeda, develop its security forces, and combat harmful influences inside Iraq while, at the same time, protect our own forces." What is the status of those two agreements, the framework agreement and the SOFA? Do you anticipate that they will be sent to the Senate for advice and consent?

Ambassador CROCKER. We continue to negotiate the terms of our bilateral strategic and security relationship so as to address both United States and Iraqi interests. Specific texts remain in flux and continue to evolve. We intend to share text with the congressional committee leadership before any agreement is concluded. In the interim, we will continue to provide briefings to members and staff to update on the progress of negotiations and the process by which agreements will be reached.

We expect to conclude the framework agreement and agreement on status of forces as executive agreements, and do not anticipate that they will be sent to the Senate for advice and consent.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ELIZABETH DOLE

OVEREXTENSION OF THE MILITARY

11. Senator DOLE. General Petraeus, I think that it is necessary to step back for a moment and place the war in Iraq within the context of projected long-term defense spending. I am increasingly concerned that because long-term defense spending is projected to be profoundly inadequate, we may lack the funds to complete the planned expansion of the Army and Marine Corps.

If we are serious about fielding an adequately-sized force, then let us not simply agree that the current situations in Iraq and Afghanistan are difficult. Let us speak with a clear voice to the American people and to this administration and the next that our forces must be expanded, and let us agree not to pursue these objectives at the expense of other important areas within future defense budgets. If we are to actually address this problem, then we must ensure that the overall defense budget is adequate rather than merely acknowledge the problems that our troops confront when defense spending is insufficient. In such cases, rhetoric is a poor substitute for action.

But I want to take this larger point and put it into the context of Iraq and get to the bottom line of whether or not in your opinion, our forces are overextended. Specifically, let's focus on what Admiral Mullen stated last week, that current force levels in Iraq prevent us from deploying a sufficient number of troops to Afghani-

stan. In your opinion, how much longer can the surge be sustained before it does irreparable harm to the force?

General PETRAEUS. I am grateful for Secretary Gates' efforts and Congress' support to ensure we have had the forces and resources we need for what have been very intensive operations. Clearly, the surge and multiple overseas deployments have strained the Active and Reserve components. Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have been particularly demanding on our ground forces, and many servicemembers have completed or are in the midst of second or third deployments. This is obviously difficult for them and their families. My own family is well acquainted with this challenge, as I have now been deployed for more than 4½ years since 2001. Reset of equipment also remains a challenge. Although it is beyond my brief to assess the overall health of the Services, this remains a subject about which I am concerned and on which I will continue to engage in dialogue with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Service Chiefs. Despite the challenges, our soldiers continue to display incredible resilience. The annual Mental Health Assessment Team survey completed last fall indicated that morale in Iraq improved this past year, and the 3rd Infantry Division, which is completing its third tour in Iraq now, has already met its reenlistment goal for the entire year. We can anticipate that these positive trends will continue as force levels in Iraq come down to presurge levels. Already we have withdrawn without replacement three Army brigades, two Marine battalions, and the Marine Expeditionary Unit; a fourth Army Brigade has transferred responsibility for its sector and is in the process of redeploying.

TROOP WITHDRAWAL

12. Senator DOLE. Ambassador Crocker, many of the major decisions made concerning our military and political efforts in Iraq, or any war, are based on best professional assessments. What is your best assessment of the consequences, both for Iraq and for the region, if we withdraw before ISFs possess the capability to maintain stability in the country?

Ambassador CROCKER. A premature drawdown of our forces would have devastating consequences. This could include a rapid deterioration of local security initiatives and the disintegration of ISFs resulting in a marked increase in violence, further ethno-sectarian displacement and refugee flows, and alliances of convenience by Iraqi groups with internal and external forces to gain advantages over their rivals. Such a drawdown would exacerbate already challenging regional dynamics, especially with respect to Iran. Ultimately, a precipitous withdrawal could increase the probability that coalition forces would have to return to Iraq to confront an even more dangerous enemy.

ADVISOR PROGRAM IN IRAQ

13. Senator DOLE. General Petraeus, we had an extensive advisor program in Vietnam. After much effort, we've realized that a similar program in Iraq would yield profound benefits, especially in terms of maximizing our limited number of personnel and their value in training Iraqi forces. An experienced group of advisers embedded in an Iraqi battalion, for example, is a profoundly valuable combat multiplier. In your professional opinion, why is there opposition to establishing and sustaining a dedicated training cadre—at least for the duration of the war?

General PETRAEUS. There is fairly widespread agreement in our military today regarding the importance of advisory work in our counterinsurgency operations, and our Services have made significant efforts to prepare servicemembers for this role. As an example, our Military Training and Transition Teams are composed of 10–15 personnel who undergo significant training prior to their arrival in Iraq. Teams that are separately sourced by the Army, Navy, and Air Force attend 2 months of training at Fort Riley, KS, and then 10 days of training at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, while Marine teams train at Twentynine Palms, CA. Teams that deploy as parts of units conduct training at their home station, and also participate in training exercises to include Combat Training Center rotations and Mission Readiness Exercises. All teams, regardless of how they are resourced, also attend an additional week's training at the Phoenix Academy in Taji, Iraq before conducting a 10-day transition with outgoing teams. The advisory effort is overseen by the Iraqi Advisory Group, commanded by a brigadier general, which supports transition teams through their arrival in Iraq, in-theater training, and redeployment. This extensive training and integration process augments team members' tactical expertise and relevant experience and allows them to best pass on that expertise to Iraqi forces. Significant en-

ergy and funds have also been invested in implementing a robust and rapid lessons learned processes.

As we assist in the development of ISFs, our troopers play a critical role in teaching, coaching, and mentoring their Iraqi counterparts. They do this as part of transition teams, but also as their units partner with Iraqi units in operational, training, and mentoring relationships.

The advisory efforts currently underway in Iraq are having the desired effect. Transition teams have significantly assisted Iraqi units in action, helping in planning and other staff functions while providing access to key coalition combat enablers. Together with unit partnerships, advisory teams have helped to move over 100 ISF battalions into an "in the lead" role. As Iraqi forces continue to develop, coalition forces will continue to transition into more advisory roles; at some point, as one of my brigade commanders recently told me, "We will all be advisors."

It is not clear that the creation of a dedicated training cadre, or advisory corps, would produce results better than those being achieved by our current efforts. In general, the best advisors are those with recent, relevant experience in units similar to the units they seek to develop. Instead of creating a separate force, it may be preferable to incentivize and reward critical advisory work. To that end the Chief of Staff of the Army recently announced several important personnel actions that reflect the importance attached to the advisory effort.

PRIVATE SECURITY FIRMS

14. Senator DOLE. General Petraeus, private security firms have attracted more than their share of controversy over the past year. The largest private firm, Blackwater, is located in North Carolina. I agree entirely that private security personnel must operate under the control of our military. But my point is to ask for your opinion of the contributions that these firms and their people make to the overall effort. How important of a role do these firms play in maintaining security across Iraq?

General PETRAEUS. Private Security Contractors (PSCs) and their employees make critical contributions to the overall effort in Iraq. These contractors provide static security for coalition facilities, key infrastructure, and reconstruction projects, and they provide mobile security for large convoys, work details, and individual high-ranking officials. The use of PSCs to meet these defensive security needs enables more of our military forces to focus on active counterinsurgency and combat operations.

An inability to continue to use PSCs would be enormously disruptive to our effort to achieve U.S. goals in Iraq. Replacing DOD contractors with military personnel would require approximately 7,300 additional military personnel to be trained and deployed to Iraq, plus additional forces to provide the expanded logistical support required. These figures do not include the requirements for the dedication and training of additional military personnel to support rotational requirements, nor the addition of equipment and vehicles such as MRAPs used by contractors, which are needed by our combat forces. The loss of PSCs would delay the drawdown of U.S. forces, could delay the ability of the Army to reduce combat tours from 15 months to 12 months, and would require a special training and certification program to be developed and implemented. The continued use of PSCs can help us sustain the significant security progress that has been made in Iraq as the level of security incidents across Iraq for the past month is the lowest it has been for more than 4 years, and we continue to transition additional responsibilities to the Iraqi Government and ISFs.

ETHNIC CONFLICT

15. Senator DOLE. General Petraeus, we are receiving mixed reports on the progress of ISFs during recent fighting in Basra, around Sadr City, and elsewhere. Some number of Iraqi soldiers, and a great number of Iraqi police, threw down their weapons, refused to fight, or actually fought alongside militia forces. In some instances, these men refused to fight against neighbors, as they were from the same communities. In some instances, ethnic allegiances still hold. In some cases, soldiers received calls on their cell phones from old colleagues telling them that if they fought, their families would be murdered. I appreciate that it takes years to create a national army, and that many of the recent problems were rooted in planning problems. That said, what is your response to these recent events, and what would you recommend to further ensure that soldiers and police think like Iraqis and less

like members of one of the various ethnic groups? Is that even doable given Iraq's ethnic makeup and the long history of conflict between Sunnis and Shia?

General PETRAEUS. Although many Iraqi units performed very well during operations in Basra and Sadr City, some others performed poorly in the initial stages, especially in Basra. Some of those who failed to fight adequately did so as a result of inexperience, while others did so as a direct result of ethnic/sectarian allegiance or pressure. The 52nd Brigade of the 14th Division, which was a new unit just out of initial training, had the most widespread difficulties. That unit has since been provided replacement leaders and troopers and been retrained, and it is now back in the fight in Basra and doing well. The strong performance of other, more experienced units suggests that ethnic/sectarian allegiances can be overcome through the training and professionalization of security forces. Toward this end, we are partnering with Iraqi leaders to institutionalize norms of professionalism, including non-sectarianism. For example, the Iraqi National Police just instituted a Code of Ethics for its forces, and the Ministries of Interior and Defense have not hesitated to remove leaders and troopers who did not measure up in combat operations.

ISF have demonstrated their growing capability and capacity in recent operations. In Basra, Mosul, Sadr City, and other locations in Iraq, ISF are conducting clearance operations as well as intelligence-driven raids, successfully extending the Iraqi Government's presence and control, removing huge amounts of arms, munitions, and explosives from circulation, and capturing key militant leaders. Iraqi forces have, for example, found over 170 caches in Sadr City alone in the past month or so. These operations have demonstrated increased planning capability, mobility, and tactical competence, as well as an ability to conduct simultaneous major operations throughout the country. Thanks to improved security and ISF capability, 8 of 16 Iraqi provinces are under Provincial Iraqi Control and 2 more provinces are due to transition by the end of June 2008.

Professionalization of armed forces alone, however, will not eliminate ethno-sectarian tension and conflict in Iraq. Ultimately, the Iraqi people must decide to move beyond the use of violence to address their concerns, including ethnic-sectarian concerns. In large part, this is already happening. Ethno-sectarian violence has fallen dramatically in Iraq over the last year, signifying that Iraqis have decided to step back from the brink of civil war. This reduction in ethno-sectarian violence is attributable not just to the increased Iraqi and coalition force presence and decreased al Qaeda in Iraq and militia capabilities, but also to the increasing rejection of violence by the Iraqi people. This progress has shown us that ethnic conflict in Iraq is not inevitable and progress is possible.

FUNDING FOR SUNNI SECURITY FORCES

16. Senator DOLE. Ambassador Crocker, I cannot stress enough how important it is that Iraqi political reconciliation must proceed with a decidedly greater sense of urgency than we have observed to date. Furthermore, I find it appalling that Prime Minister Maliki refuses to adequately fund the Sunni security forces recently formed in Anbar province and elsewhere, while tens of billions of dollars in Iraqi oil revenue sit in a New York bank. I find it nearly impossible to understand that Mr. Maliki would subordinate to some other concern the fact that instability in Anbar and elsewhere jeopardizes the safety of the Shiite population. His failure in this area jeopardizes all that has been achieved. Please share your thoughts on the subject.

Ambassador CROCKER. We are pressing Iraqi political leaders across the board to accelerate actions necessary to promote national reconciliation—by passing legislation in key areas, completing constitutional reform, broadening participation by all of Iraq's communities in the political process, improving the delivery of basic services, and imposing order evenhandedly. International agreements like the ICI elicit Iraqi progress in key reconciliation-related areas like economic self-reliance, good governance, rule of law, and civil society.

Extremists and criminal groups are resisting government control in several provinces, including Mosul, Basra, and Baghdad. As of April 2008, the Government of Iraq was conducting operations to suppress the extremists and criminal groups in each of those provinces. Such operations open the door for rapid progress towards national reconciliation. Iraqi security operations against predominantly Shia groups encourage former Sunni oppositionists to see the Government of Iraq as evenhanded in the application of the law. The main Sunni political coalition, Tawafuq, has boycotted the government for several months, but Prime Minister Maliki's moves against Shia groups should facilitate the end of this boycott.

At the same time, the Government of Iraq's ability to eliminate the Shia criminal groups' sanctuaries can reduce those groups' capacity to resist government control.

Given the close ties between these criminal groups and Shia political opposition to the Government of Iraq, suppression of the criminal groups could then lead to submission of Shia oppositionists.

The Government of Iraq, under Prime Minister Maliki's direction, has in fact taken many steps to fully fund ISFs in Anbar and elsewhere. For example, the Ministry of Interior is now fully funding the Anbar police payroll. Likewise, equipment shortages for the Anbar police are being resolved. At the grass roots level, the Iraqi Government and the coalition are working with thousands of members of the "SOI"—locally-hired, community-based auxiliaries—who reject extremism and work with established authorities to stabilize Iraq. The SOI program enhances the ability of Iraqi and coalition forces to interact with local residents and obtain information on insurgents and illegal militia activity, and protect key infrastructure.

The Government of Iraq certainly understands that security in one province affects the security in other provinces. As noted above, Prime Minister Maliki's Government is undertaking security operations to reduce instability and increase the rule of law throughout Iraq, and the Government of Iraq is performing these operations in a non-sectarian manner which facilitates national reconciliation.

[Whereupon, at 1:55 p.m., the committee adjourned.]

THE SITUATION IN IRAQ AND PROGRESS MADE BY THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAQ IN MEETING THE BENCHMARKS AND ACHIEVING RECONCILIATION

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 2008

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:33 a.m. in room SH–216, Hart Senate Office Building, Senator Carl Levin (chairman) presiding.

Committee members present: Senators Levin, Kennedy, Lieberman, Reed, E. Benjamin Nelson, Webb, McCain, Warner, Sessions, Collins, Chambliss, Graham, and Thune.

Committee staff members present: Richard D. DeBobes, staff director; and Leah C. Brewer, nominations and hearings clerk.

Majority staff members present: Daniel J. Cox, Jr., professional staff member; Michael J. Noblet, professional staff member; and William K. Sutey, professional staff member.

Minority staff members present: Michael V. Kostiw, Republican staff director; William M. Caniano, professional staff member; Paul C. Hutton IV, research assistant; David M. Morriss, minority counsel; Lynn F. Rusten, professional staff member; and Dana W. White, professional staff member.

Staff assistants present: Fletcher L. Cork, Kevin A. Cronin, and Brian F. Sebold.

Committee members' assistants present: Bethany Bassett and Sharon L. Waxman, assistants to Senator Kennedy; Colleen J. Shogan, assistant to Senator Lieberman; Elizabeth King, assistant to Senator Reed; Andrew R. Vanlandingham, assistant to Senator Ben Nelson; Jon Davey, assistant to Senator Bayh; Gordon I. Peterson, assistant to Senator Webb; Richard H. Fontaine, Jr., assistant to Senator McCain; Sandra Luff, assistant to Senator Warner; Todd Stiefler, assistant to Senator Sessions; Meghan Simonds and Mark J. Winter, assistants to Senator Collins; Clyde A. Taylor IV, assistant to Senator Chambliss; Andrew King, assistant to Senator Graham; Lindsey Neas, assistant to Senator Dole; and Jason Van Beek, assistant to Senator Thune.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CARL LEVIN, CHAIRMAN

Chairman LEVIN. Good morning, everybody.

Let us first welcome our panel of witnesses to continue our committee's series of hearings this week on the situation in Iraq.

Yesterday, we heard from General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker. Tomorrow afternoon we will hear from Secretary of Defense Gates and Admiral Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Today, we're going to hear from three distinguished witnesses:

Dr. Andrew Bacevich, professor of international relations and history at Boston University, has written extensively on U.S. national and military strategies and on the situation in Iraq. He is a retired Army officer and a Vietnam veteran.

General Jack Keane is a former Vice Chief of Staff of the Army who has visited Iraq several times. He has testified before the committee previously on this very subject, and is surely an expert on the subject.

Dr. Robert Malley has also written on the situation in Iraq from his position as Middle East and North Africa Program Director at the International Crisis Group. He is a former member of the staff of the National Security Council (NSC).

It's clear from General Petraeus's testimony yesterday that the administration's open-ended commitment in Iraq is going to continue, now reinforced by an open-ended pause. General Petraeus has recommended to his chain of command that there be a 45-day period of consolidation and evaluation, in his words, which will then be followed by a "process of assessment," which will determine, over time, when he can make recommendations for further reductions.

General Petraeus was unwilling to estimate how long this period of assessment would last, and would not even agree that it could be concluded in 3 or 4 months and then redeployment would recommence. This is a far cry from what Secretary Gates described in February as a projected "brief pause." Moreover, General Petraeus was unwilling to venture an estimate of U.S. troop strength in Iraq at the end of the year, even if all goes well.

It was also clear from General Petraeus's testimony that Prime Minister Maliki's action in Basrah once again demonstrated Prime Minister Maliki's incompetence. I asked General Petraeus about an April 3 article in the New York Times which said that, before the Iraqi Government's assault on the Mahdi army in Basrah, that he, General Petraeus, had counseled Prime Minister Maliki, saying, "We made a lot of gains in the past 6 to 9 months that you'll be putting at risk." I also asked General Petraeus about that same article's statement that he advised Prime Minister Maliki not to rush into a fight without carefully sizing up the situation and making adequate preparations. General Petraeus acknowledged that Prime Minister Maliki did not follow his advice, that the operation was not adequately planned or prepared. In effect, U.S. troops, with no control over an Iraqi operation in a province which had already been turned over to Iraqi control, were drawn into the fight when that operation went bad.

It is also clear from Ambassador Crocker's testimony that, after 5 years of training and equipping the Iraqi security forces (ISFs), and after 5 years of reconstruction, it is still the American taxpayer who is shouldering the greatest economic burden in Iraq, while tens of billions of dollars in Iraqi money sit in bank accounts around the world.

There is a vast agreement—I believe there is a consensus—that there is no military solution to the situation in Iraq, no matter how dedicated our troops may be, and no matter how much military success they achieve. To maximize success in Iraq, the Iraqi Government must take control—politically, economically, and militarily. The Iraqis must make the political compromises to bring all factions into the political system and effect political reconciliation. They must spend their own oil revenues to improve the lives of all Iraqi citizens. They must take the military initiative, using the training and equipment that we've provided them, to subdue the politically irreconcilable and criminal elements in Iraqi society. We cannot do for the Iraqis—what they must do for themselves. The open-ended commitment that the administration maintains, now reinforced by a suspension of further U.S. troop reductions beginning in July, works against getting the Iraqis to take responsibility for their own country.

We look forward to hearing our witnesses' assessment of the security situation in Iraq, the political progress in Iraq, and any recommendations that they may have with respect to a future U.S. military, political, diplomatic, and economic strategy for Iraq and the larger region.

Senator McCain.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I join you in welcoming our distinguished panel this morning, and I want to thank them for their presence here and their willingness to share their views about U.S. policy and strategy in Iraq.

Yesterday, we heard from Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus on progress in Iraq and their views of the way forward. We still have difficulties, as demonstrated by the recent fighting in Basrah and Baghdad. Yet, the gains outlined yesterday, in security, political, and economic terms, are real.

Tomorrow, the President will address the Nation to provide further information on his decisions about the way ahead in Iraq, to be followed soon thereafter by the testimony before this committee by the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

With all of these inputs into our policymaking process, Congress will face, again, the choice it confronted last year. We can build on the progress we have seen, acknowledging that there will be setbacks and new difficulties, and give our men and women in uniform the time and support necessary to carry out their mission, or we can choose to set a timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq, leading to our failure there, and presenting us with the terrible consequences that I believe will ensue.

As our witnesses no doubt recall, last year many observers predicted that the surge would fail. Yet, since the middle of last year, sectarian and ethnic violence, civilian deaths, and deaths of coalition forces have all fallen dramatically. This improved security environment has led to a new opportunity, one in which average Iraqis can, in the future, approach a more normal political and economic life. Reconciliation has moved forward, and over the weekend Sunni, Shiite, and Kurdish leaders backed the Prime Minister

in a statement supporting his operation in Basrah and urging the disbarment of all militias. Much, much more needs to be done, and Iraq's leaders need to know that we expect them to show the necessary leadership to rebuild their country, for only they can. But, today it is possible to talk with real hope and optimism about the future of Iraq and the outcome of our efforts there.

Success—the establishment of a peaceful, stable, prosperous, democratic state that poses no threat to its neighbors and contributes to the defeat of the terrorists—I believe is within reach. With success, Iraqi forces can take responsibility for enforcing security in their country, and American troops can return home with the honor of having secured their country's interests, at great personal cost, and of helping another people achieve peace and self-determination.

I hope our witnesses this morning will address the ways in which America can best achieve success in Iraq, and articulate, as well, the likely costs of our failure there.

My view has been clear. Should the United States choose to withdraw from Iraq before adequate security is established, we will exchange for victory a defeat that is terrible and longlasting. Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) would proclaim victory and increase its efforts to provoke sectarian tensions, pushing for a full-scale civil war that would descend into genocide and destabilize the Middle East. Iraq would become a failed state that could become a haven for terrorists to train and plan their operations. Iranian influence would increase substantially in Iraq and encourage other countries to seek accommodation with Tehran at the expense of our interests. An American failure would almost certainly require us to return to Iraq or draw us into a wider and far costlier war.

If, on the other hand, we and the Iraqis are able to build on the opportunity provided by recent successes, we have the chance to leave in Iraq a force for stability and freedom, not conflict and chaos. In doing so, we will ensure that the terrible price we have paid in the war, the price that has made all of us sick at heart, has not been paid in vain. Our troops can leave behind a successful mission. Our Nation can leave behind a country that contributes to the security of America and the world.

I know the witnesses this morning will have a great deal of insight to impart on these vitally important issues, and I look forward to their testimony.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator McCain.

Again, let us thank our witnesses for being here, for their work on this and so many other issues, for their long histories of good important advice to this Nation in many, many different fora.

First, we'll call on Dr. Bacevich. I think it would be good if you could limit your testimony to 10 minutes or less so that there will be plenty of time for questions. I'm referring to all three witnesses, not just you, Dr. Bacevich.

Thank you for being here. Dr. Bacevich?

STATEMENT OF ANDREW J. BACEVICH, PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND HISTORY, BOSTON UNIVERSITY

Dr. BACEVICH. Thank you for the opportunity to present my views to this committee.

I'll focus my remarks on two issues: first, near-term prospects in Iraq; and then, second, the war's larger strategic implications.

The bottom-line assessment to which I will return is this: The United States today finds itself with too much war and too few warriors. We face a large and growing gap between our military commitments and our military capabilities, and something has to give.

Let me begin with the current situation in Iraq. Although violence there has decreased over the past year, attacks on coalition and ISFs continue to occur at an average rate of 500 per week. This is clearly unacceptable. The likelihood that further U.S. efforts will reduce the violence to an acceptable level, however one might define that term, appears remote.

Meanwhile, our military capacity, especially our ability to keep substantial numbers of boots on the ground, is eroding. If the surge is working, as some claim, then why not sustain it? Indeed, why not reinforce that success by sending another 30,000 or 60,000 or 90,000 reinforcements? The answer to that question is self-evident: because the necessary troops don't exist. The cupboard is bare.

Furthermore, recent improvements in security are highly contingent. The Shiite militias, Sunni insurgents, and tribal leaders who have agreed to refrain from violence in return for arms, money, and other concessions, have by no means bought into the American vision for the future of Iraq; their interests do not coincide with our own, and we should not delude ourselves by pretending otherwise.

It is as if, in an effort to bring harmony to a fractious, dysfunctional family, we have forged marriages of convenience with as many of that family's members as possible. Our disparate partners will abide by their vows only so long as they find it convenient to do so.

Unfortunately, partial success in reducing the level of violence has not translated into any substantial political gains. Recall that the purpose of the surge was not to win the war, in a military sense. General Petraeus never promised victory. He and any number of other senior military officers have assessed the war as militarily unwinnable.

On this point, the architects of the surge were quite clear: the object of the exercise was not to impose our will on the enemy, but to facilitate political reconciliation among Iraqis.

A year later, signs of genuine reconciliation are few. In an interview with the Washington Post less than a month ago, General Petraeus said that, "No one in the U.S. Government feels that there has been sufficient progress by any means in the area of national reconciliation."

While it may be nice that the Kurds have begun to display the Iraqi flag alongside their own, to depict such grudging concessions as evidence of an emerging national identity is surely to grasp at straws.

So, although the violence has subsided somewhat, the war remains essentially stalemated. Iraq today qualifies only nominally

as a sovereign nation-state. In reality, it has become a dependency of the United States, unable to manage its own affairs or to provide for the well-being of its own people.

The costs to the United States of sustaining this dependency are difficult to calculate with precision, but figures such as $3 billion per week and 30 to 40 American lives per month provide a good approximation.

What can we expect to gain in return for this investment? The Bush administration was counting on the Iraq war to demonstrate the viability of its freedom agenda and to affirm the efficacy of the Bush doctrine of preventive war. Measured in those terms, the war has long since failed. Rather than showcasing our ability to transform the greater Middle East, Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) has demonstrated just the opposite. Using military power as an instrument for imprinting liberal values in this part of the world has produced a failed state while fostering widespread antipathy towards the United States. Rather than demonstrating our ability to eliminate emerging threats swiftly, decisively, and economically, the Iraq war has revealed the limits of American power and called into question American competence. The Bush doctrine hasn't worked. Saddam is long gone, but we're stuck. Rather than delivering decisive victory, preventive war has landed us in a quagmire.

The abject failure of the freedom agenda and the Bush doctrine has robbed the Iraq war of any strategic rationale. The war continues, in large part because of our refusal to acknowledge and confront this loss of strategic purpose.

Now, there are members of this committee who have written of their admiration for Reinhold Niebuhr. I happen to share in that admiration. Perhaps not surprisingly, Niebuhr has much to say of relevance on this issue. He once observed that, "Even the wisest statecraft cannot create social tissue. It can cut, sew, and redesign social fabric to a limited degree, but the social fabric upon which it works must be given."

In Iraq, to the extent that any meaningful social fabric has ever existed, events have now shredded it beyond repair. Persisting in our efforts to stitch Iraq back together will exhaust our Army, divert attention from other urgent problems at home and abroad, and squander untold billions, most of which we are borrowing from foreign countries.

Therefore, the best way to close the gap between too much war and too few warriors is to reduce our commitments. That means ending the U.S. combat role in Iraq. It means exerting ourselves primarily through diplomatic means to limit the adverse consequences caused by our ill-advised crusade in Iraq. It means devising a new strategy to address the threat posed by violent Islamic radicalism to replace the failed strategy of the freedom agenda and the Bush doctrine.

Now, there are people of goodwill, I know, who will disagree with this assessment. They will insist that we have no choice but to persevere in Iraq. They will further insist that restoring the social fabric of Iraq remains an imperative. To the extent that this counsel carries the day, then the predictable result will be to exacerbate even further the problem of having too much war for too few warriors.

Now, war is the realm of uncertainty. There's always the chance of catching some lucky break. Perhaps next year the Iraqis will get their act together and settle their internal differences. Such developments are always possible. They are also highly unlikely.

When it comes to Iraq, a far more likely prospect is the following. If the United States insists on continuing its war there, the United States will get what it wants: the war will continue indefinitely. According to General Petraeus, a counterinsurgency is typically a 10- to 12-year proposition. Given that assessment, and with the surge now giving way to a pause, U.S. combat operations in Iraq could easily drag on for another 5 to 10 years. In that event, the conflict that already ranks as the second longest in our history will claim the title of longest. Already our second most expensive war, it will become, in financial terms, the costliest of all. On one point, at least, Donald Rumsfeld will be able to claim vindication: Iraq will, indeed, have become a long slog.

Now, for the United States to pursue this course would, in my judgment, qualify as a misjudgment of epic proportions. Yet, if our political leaders insist on the necessity of fighting this open-ended war, then they owe it to those who have already borne 5 years of combat to provide some relief. Bluntly, if those in Washington are unable or unwilling to reduce the number of wars in which U.S. forces are engaged, then surely they ought to increase the number of warriors available to fight them.

Today, in a nation that, according to President Bush, is "at war," approximately one-half of 1 percent of the population is in uniform. Double that figure, and the problem of too much war for too few warriors goes away. The United States will then have the troops necessary to sustain Iraq and also Afghanistan for years to come.

Now, I do not want to minimize the challenges, political as well as economic, inherent in any such effort to expand our military, because they would be large. But, I will insist that continuing on our present course, in which soldiers head back to Iraq for their third and fourth combat tours while the rest of the country heads to the mall, will break the Army before it produces policy success. Worse, our present course, in which a few give their all while most give nothing, is morally indefensible.

If the Iraq war is as important as some claim, then sustaining the war merits a commitment on the part of the American people both to fight the war and to pay for it. If neither the American people nor their political leaders are willing to make such a commitment, then the war clearly does not qualify as genuinely important, and our loudly proclaimed determination to support the troops rings hollow. The choice is one that we can no longer afford to dodge. It's either less war or more warriors.

I urge the members of this committee to give this matter the attention it deserves. I thank you.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Bacevich follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY DR. ANDREW J. BACEVICH

Thank you for the opportunity to present my views to this committee. I will focus my remarks on two issues: near-term prospects in Iraq and the war's larger strategic implications.

The bottom line assessment to which I will return is this: the United States today finds itself with too much war and too few warriors. We face a large and growing

gap between our military commitments and our military capabilities. Something has to give.

Let me begin with the current situation in Iraq: Although violence there has decreased over the past year, attacks on coalition and Iraqi security forces continue to occur at an average rate of 500 per week. This is clearly unacceptable. The likelihood that further U.S. efforts will reduce violence to an acceptable level—however one might define that term—appears remote.

Meanwhile, our military capacity, especially our ability to keep substantial numbers of boots on the ground, is eroding. If the surge is working as some claim, then why not sustain it? Indeed, why not reinforce that success by sending another 30,000 or 60,000 or 90,000 reinforcements?

The answer to that question is self-evident: because the necessary troops don't exist. The cupboard is bare.

Furthermore, recent improvements in security are highly contingent. The Shiite militias, Sunni insurgents, and tribal leaders who have agreed to refrain from violence in return for arms, money, and other concessions have by no means bought into the American vision for the future of Iraq. Their interests do not coincide with our own and we should not delude ourselves by pretending otherwise.

It is as if in an effort to bring harmony to a fractious, dysfunctional family, we have forged marriages of convenience with as many of that family's members as possible. Our disparate partners will abide by their vows only so long as they find it convenient to do so.

Unfortunately, partial success in reducing the level of violence has not translated into any substantial political gains. Recall that the purpose of the surge was not to win the war in a military sense. General Petraeus never promised victory. He and any number of other senior officers have assessed the war as militarily unwinnable.

On this point, the architects of the surge were quite clear: the object of the exercise was not to impose our will on the enemy but to facilitate political reconciliation among Iraqis.

A year later signs of genuine reconciliation are few. In an interview with the Washington Post less than a month ago, General Petraeus said that "no one" in the U.S. Government "feels that there has been sufficient progress by any means in the area of national reconciliation." While it may be nice that the Kurds have begun to display the Iraqi flag alongside their own, to depict such grudging concessions as evidence of an emerging national identity is surely to grasp at straws.

So although the level of violence has subsided somewhat, the war remains essentially stalemated. Iraq today qualifies only nominally as a sovereign nation-state. In reality it has become a dependency of the United States, unable to manage its own affairs or to provide for the well-being of its own people. As recent events in Basra have affirmed, the Iraqi army, a black hole into which the Pentagon has poured some $22 billion in aid and assistance, still cannot hold its own against armed militias.

The costs to the United States of sustaining this dependency are difficult to calculate with precision, but figures such as $3 billion per week and 30 to 40 American lives per month provide a good approximation.

What can we expect to gain in return for this investment? The Bush administration was counting on the Iraq War to demonstrate the viability of its Freedom Agenda and to affirm the efficacy of the Bush Doctrine of preventive war.

Measured in those terms, the war has long since failed. Rather than showcasing our ability to transform the Greater Middle East, Operation Iraqi Freedom has demonstrated just the opposite. Using military power as an instrument for imprinting liberal values in this part of the world has produced a failed state while fostering widespread antipathy toward the United States.

Rather than demonstrating our ability to eliminate emerging threats swiftly, decisively, and economically—Saddam Hussein's removal providing an object lesson to other tyrants tempted to contest our presence in the Middle East—the Iraq War has revealed the limits of American power and called into question American competence. The Bush Doctrine hasn't worked. Saddam is long gone, but we're stuck. Rather than delivering decisive victory, preventive war has landed us in a quagmire.

The abject failure of the Freedom Agenda and the Bush Doctrine has robbed the Iraq War of any strategic rationale. The war continues in large part because of our refusal to acknowledge and confront this loss of strategic purpose.

Now there are members of this committee who have written of their admiration for Reinhold Niebuhr. I share in that admiration. Perhaps not surprisingly, the great Protestant theologian has much to say of relevance to this issue. Niebuhr once observed that "even the wisest statecraft cannot create social tissue. It can cut, sew,

and redesign social fabric to a limited degree. But the social fabric upon which it works must be 'given'."

In Iraq, to the extent that any meaningful social fabric has ever existed, events have now shredded it beyond repair. Persisting in our efforts to stitch Iraq back together will exhaust our army, divert attention from other urgent problems at home and abroad, and squander untold billions, most of which we are borrowing from foreign countries.

Therefore, the best way to close the gap between too much war and too few warriors is to reduce our commitments. That means ending the U.S. combat role in Iraq. It means exerting ourselves, primarily through diplomatic means, to limit the adverse consequences caused by our ill-advised crusade in Iraq. It means devising a new strategy to address the threat posed by the violent Islamic radicalism, to replace the failed strategy of the Freedom Agenda and the Bush Doctrine.

This reformulation of strategy should begin with an explicit abrogation of preventive war. It should include a candid recognition that invading and occupying an Islamic nation in hopes of transforming it qualifies as a fantasy.

There are people of good will who will disagree with this assessment. They will insist that we have no choice but to persevere in Iraq—although to say that the world's sole superpower has "no choice" in the matter suggests a remarkable failure of imagination. They will insist further that restoring the social fabric of Iraq—engineering the elusive political reconciliation that will stabilize the country—remains an imperative.

To the extent that this counsel carries the day, then the predictable result will be to exacerbate even further the problem of having too much war and too few warriors.

War is the realm of uncertainty. There's always some chance of catching a lucky break. Perhaps next year the Iraqis will get their act together and settle their internal differences. Perhaps next year Congress will balance the Federal budget. Such developments are always possible—they are also highly unlikely.

When it comes to Iraq, a far more likely prospect is the following: if the United States insists on continuing its war there, the United States will get what it wants: the war will continue indefinitely. According to General Petraeus, a counterinsurgency is typically a 10- to 12-year proposition. Given that assessment, and with the "surge" now giving way to a "pause," U.S. combat operations in Iraq could easily drag on for another 5 or 10 years. A large-scale U.S. military presence might be required for two or three decades.

In that event, the conflict that already ranks as the second longest in our history will claim the title of longest. Already our second most expensive war, it will become in financial terms the costliest of all. On one point at least, Donald Rumsfeld will be able to claim vindication: Iraq will indeed have become a "long slog."

For the United States to pursue this course would in my judgment qualify as a misjudgment of epic proportions. Yet if our political leaders insist on the necessity of fighting this open-ended war, then they owe it to those who have already borne 5 years of combat to provide some relief.

Bluntly, if those in Washington are unable or unwilling to reduce the number of wars in which U.S. forces are engaged, then surely they ought to increase the number of warriors available to fight them.

Today, in a nation that according to President Bush is "at war," approximately one-half of 1 percent of the population is in uniform. Double that figure and the problem of too much war for too few warriors goes away. The United States will have the troops necessary to sustain Iraq (and Afghanistan) for years to come.

I do not want to minimize the challenges, political as well as economic, inherent in any such effort to expand our military. They would be large. But I will insist that continuing on our present course in which soldiers head back to Iraq for their third and fourth combat tours while the rest of the country heads to the mall will break the army before it produces policy success. Worse, our present course—in which a few give their all while most give nothing—is morally indefensible.

If the war in Iraq is as important as some claim, then sustaining that war merits a commitment on the part of the American people, both to fight the war and to pay for it. If neither the American people nor their political leaders are willing to make such a commitment, then the war clearly does not qualify as genuinely important. Our loudly proclaimed determination to "support the troops" rings hollow.

The choice is one that we can no longer afford to dodge: it's either less war or more warriors. I urge the members of this committee to give this matter the attention it deserves.

Thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. We thank you, Dr. Bacevich, for your statement.

General Keane?

STATEMENT OF GEN JOHN M. KEANE, USA (RET.) SENIOR MANAGING DIRECTOR, KEANE ADVISORS, LLC

General KEANE. Senator Levin, Senator McCain, and members of the committee, thank you for permitting me to provide some thoughts today on our situation in Iraq.

I just returned from Iraq at the end of March, and visited three times during 2007. Let me say that the character of my visits is to spend considerable time with the Iraqi people, their sheikh and tribal leaders, as well as time with our U.S. and Iraqi military and civilian leaders, and, of course, our troops.

It is not my purpose today to repeat the assessment provided by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker during their lengthy testimony yesterday. However, I would like to emphasize some points of my own assessment, albeit similar to theirs, and draw several conclusions and implications.

First and foremost, we have the most talented and capable leadership team in Iraq, represented by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker. Nothing in my 40-plus years in national security compares to this extraordinary team, who provide the very best of leadership to their marvelous teammates and troops.

Let me begin by saying that our strategy in Iraq is working. Frankly, it is doing so beyond our initial expectations. The security turnaround in Iraq from the hell of 2006 and 3 years of failed strategy is one of the most stunning achievements in the annals of counterinsurgency practice. It was achieved in a matter of months, versus the years I thought it would take to turn around one of the most formidable insurgencies the west has ever faced.

Fundamental to that success was the use of proven counterinsurgency practices to protect the people with sufficient amount of Iraq and U.S. troops. This was a catalyst for the widespread Sunni Awakening Movement, which is truly underappreciated here in the United States. What really happened is, the sheikhs and tribal leaders decided they could not achieve their political objectives with al Qaeda in fighting the United States and the Government of Iraq. As such, the overwhelming majority of Sunni insurgent leaders made four strategic decisions: (1) to stop the violence; (2) to leverage the U.S. leaders to influence the Government of Iraq; (3) to reconcile with the Government of Iraq; and (4) provide their "sons," to work with us and the Iraqis to help defeat al Qaeda and protect their own people.

These results are the very best one could expect in fighting an insurgency. Your opponent not only surrenders, but comes to your side to assist.

The entire Arab Muslim world is aware of the Sunni rejection of al Qaeda, the first major occurrence ever where the people have rejected al Qaeda and their barbaric hold on them.

Additionally, in a recent poll, over 90 percent of Sunnis are expected to participate in the political process in the 2008 provincial election and in the general election in 2009. What does that tell us about reconciliation? Clearly, the Sunnis are politically reconciling

with the Government of Iraq, and the Government of Iraq is providing some assistance.

The implication of this is that the central region of Iraq is relatively secure, and now the United States and Iraqi forces are focusing their efforts on the remaining presence of al Qaeda in the north. In my view, al Qaeda is already operationally defeated, and the final campaign against al Qaeda is underway as we speak. We will complete that defeat of al Qaeda in the months ahead in 2008.

Make no mistake, this is genuine progress, and it has led to a significant conclusion. We cannot lose militarily in Iraq, as we were on the verge of doing in 2006. Al Qaeda and the remaining hardliner Sunni insurgents cannot mount an offensive that they could sustain which would threaten the regime.

Are we finished? No. But, we and the Iraqis have the momentum, we are on the offense, and we can finally see that winning in Iraq is now a likely outcome.

The remaining major security challenge in Iraq is in the south, where we must counter the significant Iranian influence. The Iranians have a comprehensive political, economic, diplomatic, and military strategy to accomplish two objectives: (1) to cause the United States to fail in Iraq and withdraw prematurely, and (2) to support a stable, but weak, Government of Iraq which is aligned with Iran as a result of their foothold and leverage in the south of Iraq. As such, the Iranians have been working their strategy since 2003, and have made some progress these last 2 years because of our understandable preoccupation with al Qaeda, to rescue ourselves from the jaws of defeat in 2007, as well as the British pullback, which gave the Iranians and their militias a free hand.

Admittedly, Maliki has taken a much needed first step to address this problem. As impulsive as he was, and while the planning and coordination was inadequate, this is the right course of action. We should not be quick to judge the success of a campaign by the first few days of action, when we know this is the beginning of a campaign which will last for months. My view is, the campaign in the south will not be as difficult as the fight against al Qaeda and the Sunni insurgents. Indeed, Maliki's political position has been considerably enhanced, because all the major political parties are supporting Maliki against the Sadrists, who are now isolated. In fact, this weekend Maliki announced that you cannot participate in the upcoming elections if your political party has a militia. This has thrown the Sadrists into disarray.

All that said, it is critical to succeed. It is in the United States national interests to defeat Iran in Iraq. To do so, we need a U.S. national and regional strategy. General Petraeus, Ambassador Crocker, and Mr. Maliki cannot do this by themselves. The strategy should have a political, diplomatic, economic, and military component.

In Iraq, there is much potential as we squeeze the militias militarily and politically. As I said, I believe it'll be much easier than the al Qaeda and the Sunni insurgents. We can do much to influence the sheikhs and the tribal leaders to turn around, as the Sunnis did in the central region. In fact, Sheikh Muhazem, a leader of the Tamimi tribe in the south, which is one of the largest tribes in Iraq, stretching from Basrah to Diyala, is, as we gather here,

turning against the Iranian influence and taking on the Jaish al-Mahdi (JAM). Maliki is encouraging Muhazem, and is providing financial and military support. This is significant, because we have the potential to reduce the fighting much more rapidly, as happened in the central region with the Sunnis.

In any event, the Iraqis and the U.S. forces will bring the south under security control prior to the provincial elections in the fall, in my view.

The surge or counteroffensive was always intended to buy time so that the Iraqis could make political and economic progress. This is happening. While there is much to be done, the progress is definable. How can anyone conclude there is no political progress, when, number one, the Sunnis are reconciling with a Shiite-dominated government, they stopped the violence, and are providing 91,000 of their "sons" to assist us? This, after all, was the intent of the much discussed national legislative benchmarks. Number two, as to the benchmarks, we, the United States Government, browbeat the Government of Iraq into submitting to a legislative agenda. After we have achieved some basic security, the Government of Iraq has made impressive political progress, passing 12 of the 18 benchmarks and making progress on 5 others. Significantly, four of the six legislative benchmarks, to include de-Baathification, amnesty, semi-autonomous regions, and provincial powers, are passed. Why is it so difficult to acknowledge that both these points—Sunni reconciliation and major national legislation—represent significant political progress?

Much of the discussion and debate surrounds how fast we should reduce our forces. The fact is, we are reducing our combat forces some 25 percent in 2008. I believe there will be further reductions in 2009. We should prepare ourselves that we may not reduce our forces further in 2008, because of the major operations in the north and south, and we do not want to squander the gains in central Iraq.

Our leaders in Iraq want to reduce our forces, as we all do. But, they simply want it to be measured. Two realities drive them: the fact that in the past we overestimated Iraqi capabilities to take over, and the fact that we underestimated enemy capabilities. They do not want to make those mistakes again. Erring on the side of caution makes sense, particularly in view of our hard-earned success.

It is a myth to suggest that by withdrawing rapidly, somehow that will force the Iraqis to make progress they would not make by our presence. Anyone who truly knows the situation in Iraq and the Iraqi leaders realizes it is the American presence that has aided the Iraqis to make the progress they have made and will continue to make. Our encouragement, tough-mindedness, and genuine assistance are major factors in that success.

To leave and abandon them forces them into isolation, not reconciliation. It brings out their worst fears, driven by their paranoia about the past, that the Shiites are on their own and all their enemies are around them. What is needed is our continued, but not open-ended, presence to further our mutual objectives.

One final point about our ground forces. I welcome the comments of Dr. Bacevich, that we need to expand them. They are not only

magnificent, but are performing to a standard not seen in any previous conflict. They are not a broken force, or near broken. Their discipline, morale, competence, behavior, and courage is extraordinary, and it is so with the knowledge that many Americans do not support the war, but do support them.

Are they stressed, and their loved ones as well, by the repeated deployments? Of course they are. This is a proud, resilient force that has no quit in it. They have a dogged determination to succeed. We are fighting two wars that are in our national interests, and I have known, since September 11, that our force, which I was a part of, was committed to protect the American people by staying on the offense against our enemies. They want to win, and they will. They do not want to be a party to choosing defeat or to be a part of an Army or Marine Corps that suffers a humiliating defeat.

That stark reality will break the force. Fighting protracted wars in our history has always stressed our forces. Doing what we can to reduce the impact is critical. But, choosing victory is, hands down, the best answer.

I said, earlier, we cannot lose militarily, and that should be clear; but we can lose politically because we lose our will here at home, we lose our determination to work through difficulty and uncertainty. I ask you to find the will and, yes, the courage our soldiers display routinely to persevere and to not give in to understandable frustration and to support the judgments of our gifted commander and ambassador.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Keane follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY GEN JOHN M. KEANE, USA (RET.)

Mr. Chairman, ranking member and members of the committee. Thank you for permitting me to provide some thoughts today on our situation in Iraq. I just returned from Iraq at the end of March and visited three times during 2007 (February, May, and August).

Let me say that the character of my visits is to spend considerable time with the Iraqi people, their Sheik and Tribal leaders, as well as, time with our U.S. & Iraqi military and civilian leaders and, our troops.

It is not my purpose, today, to repeat the assessment provided by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker provided during their lengthy testimony yesterday. However, I would like to emphasize some points of my own assessment, albeit similar to theirs, and draw several conclusions and implications.

First and foremost, we have the most talented and capable leadership team in Iraq represented by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker. Nothing in my 40-plus years in national security compares to this extraordinary team who provide the very best of leadership to their marvelous teammates and troops.

The security turnaround in Iraq, from the hell of 2006 and 3 years of failed strategy, is one of the most stunning achievements in the annals of counter-insurgency practice. It was achieved in a matter of months vs. the years it normally takes to turnaround one of the most formidable insurgencies the west has ever faced. Fundamental to that success was the use of proven counterinsurgency practice, to protect the people, with sufficient amount of Iraq and U.S. troops. This was a catalyst for the widespread Sunni awakening movement, which is truly under appreciated here in the U.S. What really happened is the Sheiks and Tribal leaders decided they could not achieve their political objectives with the al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), in fighting the U.S. and the Government of Iraq (GOI). As such, the overwhelming majority of Sunni leaders made four strategic decisions to: (1) stop the violence; (2) leverage the U.S. leaders to influence the GOI; (3) reconcile with the GOI; and (4) provide their "sons" to work with us and the Iraqis to help defeat the AQI and protect their own people. These results are the very best one could expect in fighting an insurgency; your opponent not only surrenders, but comes to your side, to assist. The entire Arab Muslim world are aware of the Sunni rejection of AQI, the first major oc-

currence, ever, where the people have rejected the AQI and their barbaric hold on the them. Additionally, in a recent poll over 90 percent of Sunnis are expected to participate in the political process in the 2008 provisional election and in the general election in 2009. What does that tell us about reconciliation? Clearly the Sunnis are politically reconciling with the GOI and the GOI is assisting.

The implication of this is that the central region of Iraq is relatively secure and now the U.S. and Iraqi forces are focusing their efforts on the remaining presence of AQI in the north. In my view, the AQI are already operationally defeated and the final campaign against AQI, is underway as we speak. We will complete the defeat of AQI in the months ahead in 2008.

Make no mistake this is genuine progress and has led to a significant conclusion. We cannot lose militarily in Iraq, as we were on the verge of doing in 2006. The AQI and remaining hardliner Sunni insurgents cannot mount an offensive, that they could sustain, which would threaten the regime. Are we finished, no, but we and the Iraqis have the momentum, we are on the offense and we can finally see that winning in Iraq is, now, a likely outcome.

The remaining major security challenge in Iraq is in the south where we must counter the significant Iranian influence. The Iranians have a comprehensive political, economic, diplomatic and military strategy to accomplish two objectives: (1) to cause the U.S. to fail in Iraq and withdraw prematurely; and (2) to support a stable but weak GOI, which is aligned with Iran as a result of their foothold and leverage in the south of Iraq. As such, the Iranians have been working their strategy since 2003 and have made some real progress these last 2 years because of our understandable preoccupation with AQI, to rescue ourselves from the jaws of defeat in 2007, as well as the British pull-back, which gave the Iranians and their militias a free hand.

Admittedly, Maliki, has taken a much needed first step to address this problem. As impulsive as he was and while the planning and coordination was inadequate this is the right course of action. We should not be quick to judge the success of a campaign by the first few days of action when we know this is the beginning of a campaign which will last for months. My view is, the campaign in the south will not be as difficult as the fight against AQI and the Sunni insurgents. Indeed Maliki's political position has been considerably enhanced because all the major political parties are supporting Mailiki against the Sadirists, who are now isolated. In fact, this weekend Maliki announced that you cannot participate in the upcoming elections if your political party has a militia. This had thrown the Sadirists into disarray.

All that said, it is critical to succeed. It is in the U.S. national interests to defeat Iran in Iraq. To do so, we need a U.S. national and regional strategy to defeat Iran in Iraq. General Petraeus, Ambassador Crocker and Mr. Maliki cannot do this by themselves. This strategy should have a political, diplomatic, economic and military component. In Iraq there is much potential as we squeeze the militias militarily and politically, they will fold much easier than AQI and Sunni insurgents. We can do much to influence the Sheiks and Tribal leaders to turnaround as the Sunnis did in the central region. In fact Sheik Muhazem a leader of the Tamimi tribe in the south, which is one of the largest tribes in Iraq, stretching from Basra to Dyala, is as we gather here, turning against the Iranian influence and the JAM. Maliki is encouraging Muhazem and is providing financial and military support. This is significant, because we have the potential to reduce the fighting much more rapidly, as happened in the central region with the Sunnis. In any event, the Iraqis and U.S. forces will bring the south under security control, prior to election in the fall.

The surge or counter-offensive was always intended to buy time so that the Iraqis could make political and economic progress. This is happening and while there is much to be done, the progress is definable. How can anyone conclude there is no political progress when: (1) the Sunnis are reconciling with a Shia dominated government, stopped the violence, and are providing 91,000 of their sons to assist us. This after all was the intent of the much discussed national legislative benchmarks. (2) As to the benchmarks, we the U.S. Government, "brow-beated" the GOI into submitting to a legislative agenda. After we achieved some basic security, the GOI has made impressive political progress—passing 12 of 18 benchmarks and making progress on 5 others. Significantly, four out of six legislative benchmarks including, debathification, amnesty, semi-autonomous regions and provincial powers are passed. Why is it so difficult to acknowledge that both these points, Sunni reconciliation and major national legislation, represent significant political progress?

Much of the discussion and debate surrounds how fast we should reduce our forces. The fact is we are reducing our combat forces some 25 percent in 2008. The fact is there will be further reduction for sure in 2009. We should prepare ourselves that we may not reduce our forces further in 2008 because of the major operations

in the north and south while not squandering the gains in central Iraq. Our leaders in Iraq want to reduce our forces, as we all do, but they simply want it to be measured. Two realities drive them, the fact that in the past we overestimated Iraqi capabilities to take over and the fact that we under estimated enemy capabilities. They do not want to make those mistakes again. Erring on the side of caution makes sense, particularly, in view of our hard-earned success. It is a myth to suggest by withdrawing rapidly, somehow, that will force the Iraqis to make progress they would not make by our presence. Anyone who truly knows the situation in Iraq and the Iraqi leaders, realizes that it is the American presence that has aided the Iraqis to make the progress they have made and will continue to make. Our encouragement, tough-mindedness and genuine assistance are major factors in that success. To leave and abandon them, forces them into isolation, not reconciliation. It brings out their worst fears, driven by their paranoia about the past, that the Shia's, are on their own and their enemies are all around. What is needed is our continued, but not open-ended, presence to further our mutual objectives.

One final point, about our ground forces; not only are they magnificent but are performing to a standard not seen in any previous conflict. They are not a broken force or near broken. Their discipline, morale, competence, behavior and courage is extraordinary and it is so with the knowledge that many of the American people do not support the war, but do support them. Are they stressed and their loved ones as well, by the repeated deployments, of course they are. But this is a proud, resilient force, that has no quit in it, they have a dogged determination to succeed. We are fighting two wars that are in our national interest and I have known since September 11, our force, which I was a part of it, was committed to protect the American people by staying on the offense against our enemies. They want to win, and they will, they do not want to be a party to choosing defeat, or to be a part of an Army or Marine Corps that suffers a humiliating defeat. That stark reality will break the force. Fighting protracted wars in our history has always stressed our forces. Doing what we can do to reduce the impact is critical but choosing victory is hands-down the best answer.

I said earlier we cannot lose militarily and that should be clear, but we can lose politically because we lose our will, here at home, lose our determination to work through difficulty and uncertainty. I ask you to find the will, and yes the courage, our soldiers display routinely, to persevere, to not give in to your understandable frustration and to support the judgments of our gifted commander and ambassador.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, General Keane.

Dr. Malley?

STATEMENT OF ROBERT MALLEY, MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA PROGRAM DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

Dr. MALLEY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee.

This hearing comes at yet another important time in our debate over the future of our strategy in Iraq. Some argue that the surge has been a success, and therefore, we should perpetuate our stay. Others argue that it has been a failure, and therefore, we need to leave promptly.

In my view, it's the wrong question, addressed in the wrong way, and it inevitably will lead to wrong answers. The question of troop level and the pace of our withdrawal should be the dependent variable, not the independent variable.

The real question is how and to what extent our troop presence is serving coherent, articulable, policy objectives.

I was a surge skeptic. I admit, and I am happy to admit, that the surge has exceeded, by far, my expectations, in terms of what it could achieve. Part of it is because of the planning that was done, partly for reasons that were serendipitous, and partly coincidental. But, at the core I believe it reflects a conceptual revolution at the heart of the military. Our military commanders in Iraq dis-

played, for the first time, real and sophisticated understanding of the dynamics in Iraq, which gave them the ability to carry out new policies and take advantage of new dynamics. As a result, as General Keane just described, the violence is down, areas have been pacified, and the sectarian war that was unfolding in 2005–2006 has virtually come to a halt. The end result is that the prospect of a single, devastating civil war has been replaced by the reality of smaller, more manageable ones.

But, if I'm no longer a surge skeptic, I remain very much a skeptic of the policy it's purported to serve.

Yesterday, we heard testimony from General Petraeus and my friend Ambassador Crocker, and the key questions that they were asked were: What's the objective of our policy? To what end are we pursuing our military enterprise? Until when? I was left—and I don't think I'm alone—profoundly frustrated and dissatisfied by the answers we got.

Therefore, my sense today is that, after 4 years, where the U.S. administration pursued a lofty strategy about building a democratic Iraq and transforming the region, but obviously had no realistic tactics to achieve that goal, today, for the first time, we have smart, intelligent, subtle tactics, only to find ourselves bereft of a strategy that they're supposed to serve.

The starting point, for me, needs to be two fundamental realities, and from there we need to devise a clear policy.

Reality number one is that a U.S. withdrawal at this time under these conditions—a failed state, a fragmented polity, with interference from foreign countries, with the fragility of Iraq and the rise of jihadism—would be a huge setback to U.S. interests, and I think we cannot deny that fact. It would leave Iraq as a failing state. It would probably lead to escalating internecine and sometimes perhaps horrific violence. It would lead to regional involvement in Iraq at a time of great tension in the Middle East. Ultimately, it would weaken our posture in the Middle East. That's reality number one.

But, there is reality number two, which is that our continued presence every day that we remain in Iraq also comes with a very heavy price tag. There's a human toll I don't need to evoke any further. There is the drain on our resources. Our military is overstretched. Our readiness is being undercut. Our room to maneuver in other critical issues, such as dealing with Iran, is automatically limited when we are so taken by the combat in Iraq, and our standing, our prestige, and our credibility throughout the region is being eroded.

Both realities are true, and we have to take both of them into account. That leads me to say that our policy objective should be to create a local environment in Iraq and a regional environment in the region that would minimize the damage to our interests, to the Iraqis' well-being, and to the regional environment, as a whole, of the inevitable departure of our troops. That's the task that U.S. policymakers should be pursuing. How do we minimize the damage to ourselves, to the Iraqis, and to the region of a departure that's going to have to take place probably sooner rather than later?

If that's the objective, two things, in my view, need to be at the core of U.S. policy.

First, we need to press the Iraqi Government, our Iraqi allies, to take the steps they have not taken up until now. They're the ones who could change the Iraqi local environment, not us.

Second of all, we need to devise a more coherent regional strategy in order to lessen the tensions and make sure that when we leave Iraq, Iraq doesn't become a magnet for foreign interference and doesn't become a source of further instability throughout the region.

Is the U.S. policy currently pursuing either one of those objectives? I see no evidence that it is. For me, two facts, two startling facts, put this in stark relief.

The first fact is that our best Iraqi allies in the surge, those who have allowed the progress that's been made, have not been the people we brought to power, the people we've provided with military and financial resources, the people who we protect. The people who have been our best allies are the former insurgents, our former enemies. In fact, the ones who we brought to power, protect, and promote are obstacles and are threatening the success of the surge, because they are dithering in putting in place the kind of policies that the surge was supposed to lead to.

So, what our U.S. troops have been able to achieve through their military actions, the Iraqi Government is threatening to undo because of its political dithering. That's a stunning indictment, to think that those who have helped us are those who we used to be fighting, and those who are standing in the way are those who could not survive, who could not be in power without our support.

So, we have done our part with the surge. Our allies have not. Our allies are threatening, every day by their actions, the sustainability of the surge. By not bringing together a political compact, they risk alienating the Sons of Iraq, the Awakening Councils, and the concerned local citizens who may see, in the end, that they don't have a possible partner in this government. If they don't create neutral, nonpartisan state institutions, then you'll find the tribes will simply become another force in a multilayered conflict. If they take action, as they did in Basrah—and I'll come back to that later—they risk undoing the benefits of Muqtada al Sadr's unilateral cease-fire. Time and again, we're seeing, through their actions, that they are threatening the gains that we achieved.

Now, the second fact that I think brings into stark relief the problems that our policy faces is that our allies in Iraq, those same allies I just was describing, are also the allies of our arch enemy, Iran. Iran, who we claim is trying to destabilize Iraq, and Iran who we claim is our number-one enemy in the region. So, we're fighting Iran while our Iraqi partners are partnering with Tehran. We're siding in this Iraqi intra-civil war with Iran's allies.

These two fundamental contradictions, inconsistencies, and the incoherence at the heart of our policy tells me, as starkly as it could, that we do not have a coherent policy, that our troops are performing admirably, but not in pursuit of a policy that anyone could articulate. Therefore, what it means is that they are being forced to carry a disproportionate burden—in many ways, the exclusive burden—in pursuit of unreachable goals, inconsistent objectives, and an inordinate and rising cost.

There is an alternative policy, I believe, and it has to be articulated around three fundamental pillars. The first is to put more pressure on Maliki's Government, real pressure. The second is to engage in real regional diplomacy, including and especially with Iran and Syria. The third is to transition towards a longer-term nonmilitary commitment investing in Iraq's resources.

As to the first, as I said, the key is to put pressure on our allies to do what they have been asked to do, time and again, and have not done. Despite all the benchmarks that we could recite, they have not created a national compact, they have not reached out in the way they need to, they have not created a nonsectarian, impartial state. They're not even on the way towards doing it.

To be credible, if we do want to put pressure on this government, we, the United States, have to be comfortable with the prospect of withdrawing from Iraq, even under less than auspicious circumstances. Unless and until we are convinced that we are prepared to take that step, there's no reason for the Maliki Government to believe it, and there's no reason for Maliki and his people to take any risk. Why should they? For what reason should they alienate their own constituency, threaten their fragile coalition, when they know that we're there to stay, they know that we won't ask them any questions, they know there's no consequences for their inaction, and they know we will continue to back them up.

This is not a matter of benchmarks or artificial deadlines. That's not what I'm saying. I'm saying that we have to be blunt with the Maliki Government, that if they don't do what we've asked them to do for several years, we cannot stay. It's not necessarily our first choice, but it will be the inevitable one. We can't tie our success to Maliki's survival. We can't be hostage to what he does or doesn't do. Given the gap between what U.S. troops can do and what needs to be done in Iraq, in fact, paradoxically the greatest leverage our troops have is the threat that they might withdraw and take away the support that they're giving to the Government of Maliki. There are other ways in which we need to turn from unconditional support to conditional support. We should stop all assistance to units of their army, to Iraqi commanders in the field who we know to be partisan, sectarian, and pursuing partisan and sectarian agendas. We should condition our assistance to any equip-and-train mission to proper vetting of the security forces.

The second pillar is regional diplomacy. We can't try both to stabilize Iraq and destabilize Iran. Those two policies are at war with one another. We have to choose. If we want to stabilize Iraq, we're going to have to come to terms with Iran's role in Iraq, which is deep and which will become even deeper. They have cultural, historical, military, and religious tools that we simply lack. They are there, and they'll be there for a very long time. So, if our priority is Iraq, we need to enter into tough bargaining with Iran. Iraq will be one of the issues on the table, but not the only one.

The third, as I said, and there's more in my testimony, is a long-term commitment to Iraq's depleted human resources.

What happened in Basrah, for me, is a microcosm of everything that's gone astray, everything that went astray. It was initiated by the Iraqi Government without our agreement, and it was ended by the Iranian regime without our involvement. It was an episode of

an intra-Shiite civil war in which we were dragged in as if we had no influence, no leverage, and no say. To me at least, it was dumbfounding.

So, to conclude, the question is: Is our mission on the path to minimizing the cost to our strategic interests, to the Iraqi people's well-being, and to regional stability of a withdrawal that, sooner or later, must occur, or are we simply postponing the most likely scenario: Iraq's collapse into a failed state, protracted violence, and foreign meddling? We should be clear, either there's a national compact and reconciliation and steps toward a nonsectarian, nonpartisan state and state institutions, in which case we will negotiate the terms of our departure and the pace of our departure, or those steps are not taken and we have no business continuing with this war.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Malley follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY DR. ROBERT MALLEY

Mr. Chairman: Let me begin by expressing my deep appreciation for the invitation to testify before the Senate Armed Services Committee. This hearing comes at an important time, when some argue that the surge's success dictates continuation of the U.S. military presence while others claim the surge's underlying failure commands a relatively prompt military withdrawal.

The issue and the stakes involved merit a different deliberation. I long have believed that the matter of troop levels, which absorbed so much of the debate 1 year ago and maintains its centrality today, is a misleading question that has spawned misguided answers. On its own, and in the absence of significant policy changes, the addition of troops can have an impact, perhaps even an important one. But, by its very nature, that impact inevitably will be temporary, reversible and inadequate.

The surge is a case in point. Its achievements—some planned, some serendipitous, others purely coincidental—should not to be belittled. The military campaign calmed areas that had proved particularly violent and inaccessible, such as Anbar and several Baghdad neighborhoods and essentially halted sectarian warfare. Sunni leaders, both tribal elements and former insurgent commanders, turned against al Qaeda in Iraq and reached deals with U.S. forces. Until recently at least, the Sadrist movement abided by a unilateral ceasefire and avoided confronting coalition troops. All in all, U.S. commanders in the field displayed a degree of sophistication and knowledge of local dynamics without precedent during the long course of this war. The end result can be summed up as follows: the prospect of a single, devastating civil war has given way to the reality of a series of smaller, more manageable ones.

But the question is: then what? What higher purpose will these successes serve? Are they putting the United States on a path that will allow it to minimize the costs to our strategic interests, the Iraqi people's well-being and regional stability of a withdrawal that, sooner or later, must occur? Or are they simply postponing what still remains the most likely scenario: Iraq's collapse into a failed and fragmented state, protracted and multi-layered violence, as well as increased foreign meddling that risks metastasizing into a broader proxy war?

As late as yesterday, we still have not received convincing answers to these fundamental questions. For the first 4 years of this war, the administration pursued a lofty strategy—the spread of democracy throughout the Middle East; Iraq as a regional model—detached from any realistic tactics. The risk today is that, having finally adopted a set of smart, pragmatic tactics, it finds itself devoid of any overarching strategy.

The tactical successes associated with the surge offer a fragile but genuine opportunity to reassess our overall approach and put the emphasis where it needs to be: steps by the U.S. administration to credibly pressure the Iraqi Government and alter the regional climate. This entails ceasing to provide the Iraqi Government with unconditional military support; using our leverage and the threat of withdrawal to encourage progress toward a broad national compact and a non-sectarian, impartial state; designing a long-term program of cooperation to replenish Iraq's depleted human resources; and, importantly, engaging in real diplomacy with all of its neighbors, Iran and Syria included.

If, however, this administration or its successor is not prepared to undertake such a paradigm shift, then our Nation has no business sending its men and women in harm's way. It has no business squandering its resources on a multilayered civil war. It will be time to bring this tragic policy to a close through the orderly withdrawal of American troops.

Mr. Chairman, at the outset it is important to recognize what has occurred since the surge was announced and which exceeded many observers' expectations, mine and my colleagues included. My assessment is based on the longstanding fieldwork performed by the International Crisis Group's staff and consultants who have been in Iraq repeatedly, inside and outside the Green Zone, in contact with officials, militiamen, insurgents and ordinary citizens, almost without interruption since the war began.

The surge in some cases benefited from, in others encouraged and in the remainder produced a series of politico-military shifts affecting the Sunni and Shiite communities. One of the more remarkable changes has been the realignment of tribal elements in Anbar, known as the Awakening Councils or sahwat, and former insurgents, now referred to as Sons of Iraq. This was largely due to increased friction over al Qaeda in Iraq's brutal tactics, proclamation of an Islamic State and escalating assaults on ordinary Iraqis labeled traitors or apostates (including policemen, civilians, and mere cigarette smokers). Opting to break with al Qaeda, they chose to cooperate with the U.S.

In both cases, tribal and insurgent decisions were aided by enhanced military pressure on al Qaeda resulting from augmented U.S. troops and in both instances U.S. forces displayed far greater subtlety and sophistication than at any prior point. All parties benefited. U.S. forces gained access to the tribes' and former insurgents' in-depth knowledge of local topography and human environment; conversely, groups collaborating with the coalition typically ended up with greater control over relevant areas. As a result of cooperation between the Awakening Councils, the Sons of Iraq and U.S. forces, large areas of Anbar were pacified and Baghdad neighborhoods regained a measure of stability.

Among Shiites, the most significant evolution was Muqtada al-Sadr's August 2007 unilateral ceasefire. The decision was made under heavy U.S. and Iraqi pressure and as a result of growing discontent from Muqtada's own Shiite base. The Sadrists were victims of their own success. Throughout 2006 and early 2007, the movement was on a steady rise, controlling new territory, attracting new recruits, accumulating vast resources and infiltrating the police. But there was a flip side. The vastly increased wealth, membership and range of action led to greater corruption, weaker internal cohesion and a popular backlash. Divisions within the movement deepened, splinter groups—often little more than criminal offshoots—proliferated. As a result, anti-Sadrist sentiment grew, including among Muqtada's constituency.

The U.S. surge worsened the Sadrists' situation, checking and, in some instances, reversing the Mahdi Army's territorial expansion. The August 2007 clashes in Karbala between members of Muqtada's movement and the rival Shiite Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) further eroded the Sadrists' standing. In reaction, Muqtada announced a 6-month freeze on all Mahdi army activities which he subsequently prolonged in February 2008. The decision reflects a pragmatic calculation that a halt in hostilities would help Muqtada restore his credibility, give him time to reorganize his forces and wait out the U.S. presence. Sunni and Shiite ceasefires were mutually reinforcing, as the need to defend one's community from sectarian attacks receded. Sectarian warfare largely came to an end.

Other factors account for the reduction in violence. These include a welcome shift in U.S. military posture toward population protection, shifting forces from large bases to the frontlines of the unfolding civil war, establishing neighborhood patrols and in particular filling the security vacuum in Baghdad. They also include the less welcome fact that, by the time the surge was in place, sectarian-based armed groups had divided up the capital into separate fiefdoms in which they held their increasingly homogenized population hostage. All in all, however, the surge benefited from a conceptual revolution within the U.S. military leadership, which gave U.S. forces the ability to both carry out new policies and take advantage of new dynamics. Had it remained mired in past conceptions, propitious evolutions on the ground notwithstanding, we would today be facing a very different and bleaker situation.

On their own, absent an overarching strategy for Iraq and the region, these tactical victories cannot turn into genuine successes. Yet, as far as one can tell, the tasks being performed by U.S. troops are disconnected from a realistic, articulated political strategy vis-á-vis Iraq or the region. What objectives are U.S. troops trying to accomplish? What is an acceptable endstate? What needs to be done and by whom? None of these questions has an answer, and they expose the limits of the surge's tactical success.

Without genuine efforts by the Maliki Government to reach a new political compact, the surge's achievements are insufficient. By President Bush's own standards, the military surge was useful only to the extent it led the Iraqi Government to forge a national consensus, recalibrate power relations and provide Sunnis in particular with a sense their future is secure. Observers may legitimately differ over how many of the administration's eighteen benchmarks have been met. None could reasonably dispute that the government's performance has been utterly lacking. The government's inadequate capacity cannot conceal its absence of will: True to its sectarian nature, and loath to renounce its exclusive hold on power, the Maliki Government has actively resisted moving toward compromise. Why not? It has no logical reason to alienate its core constituency and jeopardize its fragile political makeup when inaction has no consequence and the U.S. will always back it up.

A small number of agreements have been reached and are regularly trumpeted by the administration. But they have made virtually no difference. In the absence of a basic political consensus over the nature of the state and distribution of power and resources, passage of legislation is only the first, and often the least meaningful step. Most of these laws are ambiguous enough to ensure that implementation will be postponed or the battle over substance converted to a struggle over interpretation. In the absence of legitimate, representative and effective state and local institutions, implementation by definition will be partisan and politicized. To date, such has been the fate of, inter alia, the constitutional review, the Justice and Accountability Law, and the Provincial Powers Law—each one giving rise to controversy, some having done more harm than good, and none being meaningfully carried out. What matters is not chiefly whether a law is passed in the Green Zone. It is how the law is carried out in the Red Zone.

Without establishment of a more inclusive, less partisan and sectarian Iraqi political and security structure, the surge's achievements are reversible. Among Sadrist rank and file, impatience with the ceasefire already is high and growing. They equate it with loss of power and resources, believe the U.S. and ISCI are conspiring to weaken the movement and eagerly await Muqtada's permission to resume the fight. The Sadrist leadership has resisted the pressure, but in light of recent events in Basra and Sadr City, this may not last. The answer is not military. The Sadrists are as much a social as they are a political or military phenomenon. They enjoy wide and deep support, particularly among young Shiites. Excessive pressure, particularly without political accommodation by current power-holders, is likely to trigger both fierce Sadrist resistance in Baghdad and an escalating intra-Shiite civil war in the south. Again, those trends have been much in evidence over recent weeks.

Among Sunnis, mood and calculations also could readily alter. The turn against al Qaeda is not necessarily the end of the story. While some tribal chiefs, left in the cold after Saddam's fall, found in the coalition a new patron eager to provide resources, this hardly equates with a genuine, durable trend toward Sunni Arab acceptance of and participation in the political process. For them, as for the Sons of Iraq in general, it is chiefly a tactical alliance—forged to confront an immediate enemy (al Qaeda) or the central one (Iran). Any accommodation has been with us, not between them and the government. It risks coming to an end if the ruling parties do not agree to greater power sharing and if Sunnis become convinced the U.S. is not prepared to side with them against Iran or its perceived proxies; at that point, confronting the greater foe (Shiite militias or the Shiite-dominated government) once again will take precedence.

Even al Qaeda in Iraq cannot be decisively defeated through U.S. military means alone. While the organization has been significantly weakened and its operational capacity severely degraded, its deep pockets, fluid structure, and ideological appeal to many young Iraqis mean it will not be irrevocably vanquished. The only genuine and sustainable solution is a state that extends its intelligence and coercive apparatus throughout the territory, while offering credible alternatives and socio-economic opportunities to younger generations.

Without steps to build a more effective, legitimate central state, the surge's achievements could portend a serious strategic setback. The U.S. is bolstering a set of actors operating at the local level, beyond the realm of the state or the rule of law and imposing their authority by sheer force of arms. The tribal awakening in particular has generated new fault lines in an already divided society as well as new potential sources of violence in an already multilayered conflict. Some tribes have benefited heavily from U.S. assistance, others less so. This redistribution of power almost certainly will engender instability and rivalry between competing tribes, which in turn could give rise to intense feuds—an outcome on which some insurgent groups are counting. None of this constitutes steps toward consolidation of the central government or institutions; all could very easily amount to little more than U.S.

boosting specific actors in an increasingly fragmented civil war. In sum, short-term tactical achievements could pose a threat to Iraq's long-term stability.

Without cooperation from regional actors, the surge's achievements are vulnerable. Iraq's neighbors were not at the origin of, or even played a major part in, Iraq's catastrophe. But the situation is such that sustainable stability is impossible without their consent. If dissatisfied, the sahwat or Sons of Iraq could seek help from neighboring Arab states seeking to promote their influence, counter Iran, or pursue a sectarian, Sunni agenda. Iran has the greatest ability to sabotage any U.S. initiative and its help is required to pressure insurgents and militias to pursue a political path. U.S. troops can seek to contain this influence, but they are pushing against the tide. Tehran's role is there to stay and, over time, deepen, exercised through myriad channels—military, but also religious, cultural, economic and humanitarian. Tehran enjoys strong ties to actors across the political system, both within and outside the government. If the goal is to reduce Iran's destabilizing efforts and reach some accommodation over Iraq's future, this can only be done through U.S. diplomatic engagement with Tehran and negotiations over all issues.

The bottom line is that it cannot be up to U.S. troops to achieve prerequisite of success: a legitimate, functioning government; credible, effective institutions; a less hostile regional environment. Those goals, if they can be accomplished at all, only can be done by Iraqis and by hard-headed U.S. diplomacy. This is not a military challenge in which one side needs to be strengthened and another defeated. It is a political one in which new local and regional understandings need to be reached. That is not occurring. Instead, far from being a partner in an effort to achieve a new compact or stem violence, our allies in the government are one side in a dirty war over territory, power, and resources. Likewise, far from engaging Tehran, the administration has objected to genuine, broadbased negotiations, placing it in the awkward position of relying on Iranian allies in Baghdad while at the same time developing a tough anti-Iranian strategy for the region.

Mr. Chairman, three critical observations derive from this analysis.

First, the United States's best allies during the surge have not been the parties we brought to power, protected and supported. They have instead been former leaders of the insurgency and armed groups who, for their own reasons, chose to side with us. That in itself represents a stunning indictment of U.S. policy to date. It means we have been unable to pressure those over whom we possess the greatest leverage.

Second, the reason the U.S. lacks this leverage is that it has not convinced itself—and perforce its Iraqi allies—that it eventually might have to withdraw even in the absence of strategic success. This does not mean the U.S. should announce its departure now or espouse a timetable or rigid benchmarks. It means, however, that the administration should be prepared to live with the consequences of withdrawal if the Iraqi political class fails to make rapid, substantive progress toward political accommodation and establishment of non-partisan, non-sectarian state institutions. It means the U.S. must be prepared to bluntly convey that sentiment to its Iraqi interlocutors. For as long as the U.S. ties its fate to that of its Iraqi allies, it will remain hostage to their ineptitude or ill-will. Given the mismatch between what U.S. forces can do and what needs to be done, their greatest utility paradoxically may lie in the credible threat of withdrawal.

Third, the United States's allies in Iraq are also allies of Iran which is our and, we claim, also one of Iraq's greatest foes. Ironically, we have been siding with Iran's partners in the intra-Shiite civil war . That points to yet another fundamental contradiction at the core of our policy: the U.S. cannot simultaneously pursue the competing and self-defeating goals of stabilising Iraq and destabilising Iran. It must choose.

Prolonging the military mission makes sense only if part of a strategy that is coherent, sets achievable goals, puts the onus on the Iraqi Government and its allies to take long-overdue steps, and accepts the need for a U.S. regional approach, including engagement with Iran and Syria and redefinition of our objectives in the Middle East. Absent such overarching policy objectives, U.S. troops are being asked to carry a disproportionate burden to attain unreachable and inconsistent objectives at inordinate and rising cost.

The recent Basra operation is a microcosm of all that is astray in the current approach. The battle was initiated by the Iraqi Government without our agreement and halted by the Iranian regime without our involvement. Maliki informed coalition officials only a few days prior that he intended to target militias in the south. His protestation to the contrary notwithstanding, the operation was neither broadly aimed at all militias nor narrowly focused on so-called special groups. Militants linked to the Fadhila party were untouched, despite years of violently flouting the law. Nothing was done to the Badr organisation, ISCI's militia which, according to

some reports, may even have fought alongside government forces. Without question, the target was the Sadrists and ISCI's as well as Maliki's purpose was to cut them down to size in advance of provincial elections scheduled for October. As the Iraqi Government seeks to replicate the tribal model to the south, and encourage tribes to take on the Mahdi Army, potential sources of internecine violence will multiply. The struggle was another episode in the ongoing intra-Shiite civil war, a harbinger of what awaits much of the country if current trends continue.

For the U.S., the downsides were legion. The affair reversed timid U.S. efforts to reach out to the Sadrists. It threatened their tenuous ceasefire and led to lethal rocket attacks on coalition personnel in the Green Zone. It wholly contradicted the notion of an impartial, non-politicised state. It called into question the tentative security and stability Baghdad and other parts of the country. It ended up boosting the Sadrists—who showed the strength of their organisation; Muqtada—whose stature grew among his followers; and Iran—which mediated the truce. Meanwhile, Iraqi forces performed poorly, unable to dislodge the Sadrists from their southern strongholds and victims of a high number of defections.

Yet, throughout the U.S. appeared at best passive, more often complicit. It allowed its airpower and Special Forces to be dragged into an intra-Shiite power struggle at the worst possible time, with the least possible coordination and resulting in the worst possible outcome. Despite Iraqi reliance on U.S. political and military support, the administration acted as if it had no leverage, no influence and no say. The episode was nothing short of dumbfounding.

Mr. Chairman, in seeking to define concrete, achievable goals for our troops, I believe we must begin with acknowledgment of two basic realities.

First, a U.S. withdrawal under existing conditions—an Iraq dominated by armed militias, sectarian forces and a predatory political class; the collapse of the state apparatus, the lack of any political accommodation; the rise of jihadism; an extraordinary refugee crisis; and a regional context more polarized and tense than ever before—would constitute a stark and perilous setback. It would leave Iraq as a failing state, set the stage for escalating and perhaps horrific violence and invite regional involvement and radicalism that will further damage our posture in the Middle East.

But, second, that a continued U.S. military presence carries a heavy price tag as well. With each passing day, the human toll mounts. Precious resources are expended. Our military is overstretched and our readiness undercut. U.S. margin of maneuver on other critical national security issues is further limited. Our influence and credibility in the region and throughout the world continue to erode.

The objective it follows should be to create a local and regional environment that minimize the damage flowing from the departure of our troops that, sooner rather than later, must occur, A strategy that seeks to capitalise on the surge's achievements to promote that goal would rest on the following three pillars:

1. A new forceful approach that puts real pressure and exercises real leverage on all Iraqi parties, government included. The ultimate goal would be overhaul of the sectarian political system and establishment of a more equitable and inclusive compact, agreed upon by all relevant actors—e.g., government, militias, and insurgent groups—on issues such as federalism, resource allocation, internal boundaries, de-Baathification, the scope of the amnesty, the makeup of security forces, and the timetable for a U.S. withdrawal.

Pressing the Iraqi Government and its allies is key. As noted, the U.S. must move away from unconditional support and use the credible threat of military withdrawal if the government does not compromise, fairly implement new legislation or take steps toward impartial state institutions. Our position should be clear: continued U.S. presence depends on whether there is movement in this direction. If the compact is not reached or implemented, the U.S. would significantly accelerate the withdrawal of forces that then will have lost their main purpose. Conversely, if and when a compact is reached, a responsible schedule and modalities of coalition withdrawal should be negotiated and agreed upon.

There are practical, short-term consequences as well. The U.S. should only support Iraqi military operations consistent with its own goals and strategy; base training and assistance on the professionalism and non-partisan behaviour of its Iraqi recipients; and shun sectarian ministers or army units and their commanders. Likewise, the U.S. should condition its help to expand and equip the security apparatus on a strict vetting process and retraining program.

2. A new multilateral strategy that focuses on the region and includes engagement with Iran and Syria. The ultimate goal would be to diminish ten-

sions and polarisation while agreeing on rules of the game for outside powers to ensure that a U.S. withdrawal trigger neither a regional scramble for power in Iraq nor a local scramble for patrons by Iraqis—either of which would cause greater instability and loss of American influence. In principle, neighbouring countries and other regional powers share an interest in containing the conflict and avoiding its ripple effects. But, divided by opposing agendas, mistrust and lack of communication, they so far have been unable to coordinate their policies to that effect. Most damaging, given Iran's enormous sway in Iraq, has been competition between the U.S. and Iran and the conviction in Tehran that Washington is seeking to build a hostile regional order. Broad reassessment of U.S. regional policy will be required, as will wide-ranging negotiations with Iran, whose influence will not be checked militarily but mainly through tough bargaining.

There are other regional dimensions. The explosive question of the Kurdistan region's boundary with the rest of Iraq obliges the U.S. to define a clear and coherent relationship with its North Atlantic Treaty Organization ally, Turkey, and its Kurdish friends. It cannot address the question of al Qaeda in particular and jihadi salafism more generally without looking at its sources in Arab Gulf States.

3. A long-term commitment to invest in and replenish Iraqi human resources. Our obligations and responsibility will not end after our troops have left. Iraq's human resources have been sapped by years of sanctions, warfare and post-war mismanagement. Much of the qualified middle class lives in exile or is stuck in professional stagnation. The educational system is eviscerated. Universities are dysfunctional, children barely learn how to read and girls have been particularly victimised. Blanket de-Baathification removed experienced managers. Civil war dynamics in urban centres purged them of less sectarian and more open-minded professionals. Oil-rich, Iraq today is also humanly bankrupt. It will take decades to recover and rebuild.

To this end, Iraqis need training of civil servants, scholarships and agreements with foreign universities. Refugees also must be tended to. Many belonged to Iraq's middle class and fled precisely because they were non-sectarian, were unaffiliated with any given militia, and therefore lacked the necessary protection. They should not be abandoned, left to stagnate and languish but rather be prepared for their return. Exile should be used to hone new skills that will facilitate their eventual social reintegration. There is every reason to assist host countries—Syria included—in that endeavor.

This scenario does not constitute a clearcut victory under any realistic definition. But, in all likelihood, it represents the optimal outcomes at this late stage. At the very least, it is consistent with obligations incurred toward those who were sent to wage this war and toward those on whose soil it has, for their enduring misfortune, been waged.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you so much, Dr. Malley.

Let's try 8 minutes for our first round of questions.

I want to do something a little bit unusual, for me at least, and that's to spend my time asking our witnesses to react to each other's testimony. This is very powerful testimony from all three of you. It's very different.

I want to start with you, Dr. Bacevich. If you would just take a couple of minutes, if you feel free, to comment on General Keane and any comment that you have on Dr. Malley's testimony. I'm going to ask each of you to spend a couple of minutes commenting on the other witnesses's testimony.

Dr. BACEVICH. I understand, Senator.

I guess in response to General Keane I would want to raise two issues.

The first issue is time. We've already been in Iraq, engaged in a war for over 5 years. Even to the extent that the surge has achieved some amount of improvement in the security situation, we have a long, long, long road ahead of us. The question of how long that road is, and I mean in terms of approximations. Nobody can

say that it's going to be 18 months or it's going to be 24 months. But to some degree, the wisdom of continuing to go down this path has to be related to how long that road is, because the farther we go, the more it costs monetarily, the more it costs in terms of American lives. It seems to me that there's a tendency not to want really to address that issue directly. How long is it going to take?

The second thing is that there's a real need, I think, to try to place the Iraq war back in some kind of a larger strategic context. What I was trying to suggest in my remarks is that the Iraq war came out of a particular vision of U.S. strategy that was devised by the Bush administration in the 6 to 12 months following September 11, probably best expressed in the national security strategy of 2002, and that OIF was intended to demonstrate the viability of that approach to dealing with the larger threat of violent Islamic radicalism.

In that context, it seems to me, this war has failed. This war does not provide us a paradigm or a model that somehow we are going to employ elsewhere in order to deal with that larger strategic threat, in order to make sure that another September 11 on a worse scale doesn't happen.

So, it sort of raises the question: What is the U.S. grand strategy? My own sense is that the perpetuation of the Iraq war doesn't lead to a strategy, doesn't produce a set of principles to help us understand how we're going to deal with the threat posed by Islamism. In many respects, the perpetuation of the Iraq war actually provides an excuse not to address that overarching question of, what are our guiding strategic principles?

That would be my response to General Keane.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Dr. Bacevich.

General Keane?

General KEANE. Yes. Thank you.

I totally agree that we do not have a national strategy dealing with the war against radical Islam, given the fact that we will probably spend most of this century on that issue. I look back at the Cold War, where we did have a national strategy, one of containment, which transcended Presidents and different persuasions from political parties, but, in a general sense, different administrations supported that national strategy, that led to successful prosecution of the cold war. We are lacking that. There's no mistake about it.

In terms of Iraq itself, I disassociate my comments with Dr. Bacevich that what we need to do is simply begin de-escalation and withdrawal from Iraq. I would agree with that if it was measured based on the realities and the situation on the ground.

In terms of the Army at large, I totally agree that the Army is too small. We have probably known that since the late 1990s, if we're totally honest with ourselves about this. We took too deep a cut as a result of the peace dividend from the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Then we made another major mistake, post-September 11, that we did not grow our ground forces.

Now, in fairness to all of you, nobody was putting in front of you a proposal to grow our ground forces post-September 11, either. That's the reality of it. Even the service that I am associated with

was not fighting to grow the ground forces inside the Department of Defense (DOD) post-September 11, either. I just want to put those facts out there.

The reality is, we are too small to counter the threats that are in front of us. The fact is the form of warfare by many of our opponents has changed. They know they cannot contest us directly with military arms and organizations, and they want to expose our vulnerabilities, which lead, by definition, to more protracted wars.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Dr. Malley?

Dr. MALLEY. Just three quick comments on the testimony by General Keane.

As I said, I think the surge has produced more than I would have expected, but we shouldn't fool ourselves, the reconciliation has been with us, not with the Iraqi Government. That's what this is about, and that's why it's not sustainable unless there is real reconciliation with the government.

Second point. Yes, a number of benchmarks have been met, and some legislation has passed, but that really is not the measure of whether there is actually the building of a state that's legitimate and functional and recognized by all. These are pieces of paper that are being signed. Nothing has yet to be implemented. Most of the time, whatever is signed then gives rise to postponement of implementation or argument over implementation, which is simply another way to argue over the underlying legislation itself.

Finally, on the operation in Basrah, which I continue to think was a very ill-thought-out enterprise. This was not a broadbased enterprise against militias. Some militias were participating in it. Ishmic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) which is allied with Maliki, was participating on the other side of the battle; nor was it narrowly focused on the so-called special groups. Let's call it what it was, it was another step in an internal Shiite civil war. The target was Muqtada al Sadr. I think that could have real consequences for us.

Chairman LEVIN. Some months ago, according to the DOD document, the State Department, interviewing senior military commanders, said the following, that "senior military commanders now portray the intransigence of Iraq's Shiite-dominated government as the key threat facing the U.S. effort in Iraq, rather than al Qaeda terrorists, Sunni insurgents, or Iranian-backed militias."

Do you agree with that, Dr. Bacevich?

Dr. BACEVICH. I probably basically subscribe to that proposition, but would want to, I guess, expand on it a little bit. I'm not sure that there's any major group in Iraq that actually signs up to our vision of what Iraq is supposed to look like, whether you're talking Sunnis, whether you're talking Shiites, whether you're talking Kurds, or whether you're talking tribes. One of the likely fallacies of our efforts, at this point, is to assume that those who say they side with us, those who support us, those who take our money in return for setting down their arms, share our long-term purposes. In many respects—and, I think, here I agree with Dr. Malley—what the surge has done is to encourage a revival of tribalism to endorse the existence of groups that possess arms and probably have very little intention of surrendering those arms, and there-

fore, allowing the central state to ever exercise a monopoly of violence.

So, I think my bottom-line point here is that we may be deluding ourselves in thinking that any amount of cajoling or encouragement or bribery can actually persuade different groups to buy into our vision of a legitimate, coherent Iraqi nation-state.

Chairman LEVIN. Do either of you have any comment on that? My time is up. If you could make it brief.

General KEANE. Yes. In reference to the Maliki Government, it's a challenge, to be sure. They've been growing in this position. They're certainly frustrating to work with. Maliki has probably got about a year and a half left in office. The Sunnis will be enfranchised in the next government. There'll be considerably more participation in it from that community. The coalition will change rather dramatically.

But, the fact of the matter is, at our urging and with our assistance, Maliki has made some progress here. Pensions are now being paid, as well as amnesty for those who were fighting the government. He's permitting them to come back into the government through the de-Baathification program and to participate in the social fabric of life. That is the beginning of a government connecting with those who were disenfranchised.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Dr. Malley, do you just want to——

Dr. MALLEY. I would, of course, echo that view and say, not only because of its intransigence, it's part of what's preventing——

Chairman LEVIN. Oh, the view that I quoted?

Dr. MALLEY. Yes, absolutely. But, also because the Iraqi Government's intransigence is what is threatening to undo the gains that have been made with Sunnis against al Qaeda and with the ceasefire with the Mahdi army.

Chairman LEVIN. I've arranged with Senator Reed to take the gavel for about 45 minutes.

First, Senator McCain.

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank the witnesses for being here.

General Keane, was Prime Minister Maliki's move into Basrah ill-advised or ill-timed?

General KEANE. That's a great question. I think, from our perspective, we probably would have waited until the spring to conduct that operation. But at the end of the day, this is Maliki's country. He's impulsive. He got a lot of information just prior to that. I think he finally came to grips with the scale of the Iranian influence and the fact that it is threatening his regime, and how Sadr is tied into that influence. That resulted in the precipitation of that operation.

Our commanders were working on a campaign for the south for some time, and had discussions with him, and I think it's through those discussions that illuminated the scale of the problem.

So, yes, it would have been better if he waited a little bit further so we could have set the conditions, but the fact is, we had to get after this anyway. Now we're after it. It didn't start out right, but I'm convinced it will finish right.

Senator MCCAIN. In order to understand the adversaries, these are basically Shiite militias, a lot of which have been influenced by the Iranian training, supplies, and equipment. Is that correct?

General KEANE. That's absolutely true. They're not the only militias there, but the Iranians are influencing both sides. They do it through training, they do it through laundering money, and they do it through diplomatic influence. They take some of the sheikh and tribal leaders, and bring them over to Iran to show them that Iran is a stable country, friendly to them. Their malign influence has been growing for some time in the south.

Senator MCCAIN. In Mosul, where we have another battle raging, my understanding is it's going to go on for a couple or 3 months, it is al Qaeda—Sunni extremists, primarily that we're struggling against there.

General KEANE. Yes, there are two security operations in front of us. One is in Mosul, which are the remnants of al Qaeda. This is not the al Qaeda that we were fighting in Anbar Province or the al Qaeda that was in Baghdad and certainly not the al Qaeda that was in Baqubah. We will finish that campaign, in my judgment, in a few months. I think then the command itself will be able to admit that AQI are operationally defeated. I believe they already are, but that campaign will finish it and remove any doubt about it.

Senator MCCAIN. Dr. Bacevich, do you have a differing view on that tactical situation on the ground?

Dr. BACEVICH. No, sir.

Senator MCCAIN. Dr. Malley?

Dr. MALLEY. Just, again, to come back to the question of Basrah. I think there are two questions. It appears to be ill-timed, and your questioning, yesterday, I think, of General Petraeus brought out that we would have done it differently and at a different time.

I think it goes deeper. It was not just ill-timed, it was ill-conceived. This was not an operation, as I said, against militias. ISCI has a Badr Corps. It was formed by the Iranians, it's funded by the Iranians. They were not going after militias, they were going after a particular group. They didn't go after Fadhila, which also has a militia which has been flouting the law in Basrah for a long time.

Maliki should not have been involved in it. We should not have been involved in it and dragged into it with our air support and special forces, which may cost us in other ways.

Dr. BACEVICH. Senator?

Senator MCCAIN. Dr. Bacevich, yes, but could I just say before you comment on that; I want to express all of our sympathy for the tragic loss of your son, and thank you for his service to our Nation.

I would like for you to comment on that. But, also would you comment on your testimony, where you said we should have vigorous diplomatic efforts. How would you envision that? Would that also include face-to-face talks with the Iranians?

Dr. BACEVICH. Yes, sir. Could I go back to the previous issue just for a second?

Senator MCCAIN. Sure.

Dr. BACEVICH. I hate to make one of these horrible Vietnam comparisons, but when I was reading the news reports about the Basrah operation, I have to admit the thing that came to mind was

Lam Son 719, which, remember, well into the Vietnamization project, this was supposed to be the unveiling of the new Army of the Republic of Vietnam.

Senator MCCAIN. Incursion into Laos.

Dr. BACEVICH. Right. It turned out that it didn't go well. It does seem to me that there's some, at least, echos of that. I mean, we've been trying hard for 5 years to build up the ISFs, and all I know is what I read in the newspapers, but it's hard to see that their performance was especially distinguished, which again brings us back to the time issue that it would appear to me that we have a long, long time before we're going to have that force built up to the level it's going to be able to handle the security requirements.

Yes, sir, I did refer, in my comments, to diplomatic effort. I do subscribe, I think, in general terms, to the proposal made by the Iraq Study Group almost a year and a half ago, which I take to be based on an assumption that would have to be tested, but an assumption that there is a common interest in the region.

Senator MCCAIN. How do you test it?

Dr. BACEVICH. You test it by beginning discussions with other regions in the Nation. A common assumption is that we have a common interest in stability. We share a common interest in avoiding having Iraq or the disintegration of Iraq end up promoting a larger chaos in the region. Yes, sir, I believe that one would necessarily have to include Iran in that conversation.

Senator MCCAIN. Just to clarify, again, that the insurgency in Mosul is al Qaeda. There are other Sunni extremists, as well, aren't there, that they're battling against in Mosul?

General KEANE. Yes, they are aligned with some Sunni hardliners that are still fighting us. So, they do have some Sunni support structure, as they had in other provinces, as well.

Senator MCCAIN. Dr. Malley, I'd be interested in your comment about direct talks with the Iranians, and also any comment about the situation in Mosul, as well.

Dr. MALLEY. On the Iranians, obviously, we have talks with them already. They're limited in Iraq.

Senator MCCAIN. Yes, but I think you would agree there's a difference between the kind of encounters that Ambassador Crocker has had, as opposed to a full-blown face-to-face discussion.

Dr. MALLEY. Absolutely.

My view is, it is a fallacy that we tend to view engagement as a prize that we withhold or nonengagement as a punishment that we inflict. I think we should be negotiating, with tough, tough positions, and not sacrificing our principles with Iran or with Syria.

In the case of Iran, as I said earlier, I don't see how we could stabilize Iraq at the same time as we're trying to destabilize Iran. Iran is closer, has more ties, has influence in the government, in the opposition, in the tribes, and in the militias. We can't simply pretend that's not the case.

I think we're going to have to talk to them. We're going to have to negotiate with them on the full range of issues, whether it's the nuclear issue, whether it's Iraq, or whether it's the support for militant violent groups in the region. That's going to have to be done, because, so far, the alternative, which has been not to talk to them, certainly has not served their interests.

Senator MCCAIN. Dr. Bacevich, finally, you made reference to the Vietnam war, and I think we are all in agreement about how overstressed the military is, and how tough it's been, and the unwise reductions in the size of the military that took place in the 1990s, the so-called peace dividend. Would you argue that a defeated military also has some devastating effects that take a long time to cure?

Dr. BACEVICH. Yes, sir. But, I'd agree with General Keane that there's no way we can possibly be defeated, and a strategy of deliberate, phased withdrawal, to my mind, does not constitute defeat.

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you.

My time is up.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator REED [presiding]. Thank you, Senator.

Senator Kennedy.

Senator KENNEDY. Thank you.

Thank all of you.

I'd like to come back to get your views on this, Iran in Iraq. We've heard a great deal about it during the testimony of General Petraeus. We've heard a great deal about the radiant support of various kinds of units that are out there threatening the security of American forces. We have allies who are over there, who are welcoming the Iranians in celebration of their leadership. We have Iranian diplomatic leadership that evidently played a role, in terms of establishing a cease-fire, which we've welcomed. It seems that we, as a country, never anticipated, in the involvement of the war that we have in Iraq, the role of Iran. Maybe we did, but maybe we didn't. Either we ignored it or we didn't anticipate it.

Dr. Malley was talking briefly about this in response to the other question; but it does seem to me that we ought to have a better kind of understanding about whose side are they on and how we ought to be dealing with the process, because it does seem to me that they are convenient targets. Maybe they should be. What should we be thinking, and how should we be dealing with it?

I'll start with Dr. Malley, and then if each of you would take a couple of minutes on it. I appreciate it.

Dr. MALLEY. Several comments. First, it's true that throughout this war we've tended to look to outside causes for the failures that we've faced. One day it's Iran, one day it's Syria, then we find another. I think there is that tendency, whereas so many other problems are homegrown.

That being said, there's little doubt that Iran is pursuing what can be described as a policy of managed, and sometimes less managed, chaos in Iraq. They see us tied down. They don't want us to turn our attention to them. They think we are bleeding, strategically and militarily. So, it's perfectly logical for them to be pursuing a policy of investing in as many actors as they can in Iraq. They've been proficient at this for a long time, much more proficient than we could ever be working with the Kurds, the Shiites, or with militias inside and outside of government, including militias that are fighting each other. They used to do that in Lebanon, as well. They're very good at it, and they'll continue to do it.

The question is: What do we do? What is our approach? I always judge a policy by whether it succeeds or fails. Iran is continuing its

meddling in Iraq, and it's harmful meddling in Iraq, in terms of our interests. It's continuing to enrich uranium, it just announced that it's going to expand it. It's continuing to support Hamas and Hezbollah. None of the criteria that we would judge to see whether our approach of containment and isolating and not talking, whether it's succeeded, points to success. On every single criteria, things are the same or getting worse. At a minimum, that argues for reassessment, and I would say it argues for the kind of tough, clear-eyed negotiations, bargaining with the Iranians, to see whether, in fact, we can reach agreement on an end state for Iraq which is not either one of our ideal situations, but with which we both could live, perhaps even the ways in Iranians and us have similar interests in Iraq. Neither one of us wants to see it descend into chaos and spill over into Iran.

So, I think we need to have that discussion. It hasn't taken place. There's so many reasons, from the nuclear proliferation to stability in the Middle East, and, most of all, the security of our troops in Iraq, why that discussion needs to begin.

Senator KENNEDY. General Keane?

General KEANE. Yes, Senator. As I indicated before, one of the problems we had, certainly, with the change in strategy in Iraq, we were completely preoccupied with al Qaeda and the threat of the Sunni insurgents and the fact that they were winning and our policy was failing and Baghdad was a bloodbath. So, that has preoccupied us for 2 years, to rid ourselves of that. Obviously that has occurred.

Meanwhile, the British were pulling back from the south, and we lost a lot of our situational awareness as that has occurred, and we turned it over to the Iraqis. While they have some human intelligence, they don't have the enablers that we do. So, a lot of what was happening in the south, we did not have the kind of resolution that we should have. Nonetheless, we know that Iranians' goals are very clear: they want us to fail in Iraq, and they want a stable government in Iraq that's friendly and aligned with them; but aligned with them is very important, and not aligned with the United States.

I think the essential problem—I do agree with Dr. Malley, here—is that we do not have a national policy, in terms of defeating Iran in Iraq, or a regional strategy to deal with that. We should not leave this up to General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker to work this out by themselves. They are a part of that fabric, and they have some of the tools to apply, for sure; but, we need a broader path than that to help them with that strategy. I do think we can. We have to, certainly, understand what are Iran's interests here. The fact that they want a stable Iraq, as we do, is a beginning for both of us to deal with this issue.

Senator KENNEDY. Dr. Bacevich?

Dr. BACEVICH. Again, I think the place to begin is trying to ask the larger strategic question. I mean, it seems to me that, to a very great extent, we tend to still think of Iran as this seat or source of Islamic revolution that they are intent on exporting around the world. I mean, after September 11, when President Bush lumped Iran into the so-called Axis of Evil, this sort of revived this image

of a state with which we can have nothing to do, and that poses a threat to our vital interests. I think the basic image is false.

The Islamic revolution in Iran is a failure. They're not going to export their revolution anywhere. Iran does not pose a threat to our vital interests. Iran is a mischiefmaker. In that sense, therefore, it seems to me that we should be more able, more willing, as I think Dr. Malley was suggesting, to try to at least understand, not necessarily empathize or agree with, how they define their security requirements and their security concerns, which are real, and then use that as a point of departure for engaging in a dialogue. A dialogue is not simply waving the white flag. A dialogue is a serious, tough-minded negotiation that tries to determine whether or not we have some common interests that can at least alleviate the kind of hostile relationship that we've had for the last 30 or 40 years.

The Iranians are not going to go away. They're going to be the neighbor of Iraq for as long as there is Iraq. So, it's quite understandable, it seems to me, that the Iraqis are going to have a rather particular view of Iran that may well differ from our own.

Senator KENNEDY. Thank you very much.

My time is up. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator REED. Thank you, Senator Kennedy.

Senator Sessions.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you very much.

Thank you, panelists, for your testimony.

Dr. Bacevich, I would think about your statement that a strategy of deliberate, phased withdrawal does not constitute defeat, I would say that it doesn't necessarily constitute defeat, but it could precipitate a defeat. It is a withdrawal policy, as I understand it, at least the one that's being discussed publicly around here, that's a withdrawal not tied to the conditions on the ground, and I believe it could put us in a position of defeat, which Dr. Malley says would be very detrimental to the United States and the region.

General Petraeus has his Ph.D. at Princeton University and was number one in the General Staff College class. He has been 3 years in Iraq. He was in Mosul with the 101st. He trained the Army for a year on another tour. Now, he came back and wrote the counterinsurgency manual for the United States of America. He has testified here that, in his view, a withdrawal should be tied to the conditions on the ground.

General Keane, thank you for your participation in helping to draft the surge policy. I know that was a philosophy you thought would work. You did not believe our current policy was working. General Petraeus and General Odierno and others have executed that, and it has, as Dr. Malley said, achieved more than any of us would have thought possible.

So, I have to tell you, when faced with a choice, I'm going with General Petraeus' recommendation. If he needs a few months, he says a pause, I think he's entitled to have that. I believe, despite all the difficulties that we've had, and I have to tell you, 2 years ago I was worried, I was very concerned about the status of our situation in Iraq, and I remain concerned about it. I certainly favor the withdrawal of our troops as soon as we can possibly do so.

General Keane, you have provided an optimistic view here. You're a four-star general, 37 years in the military, not a Pollyanna. You see progress being made, real progress being made. Senator Collins, yesterday, sort of asked a question I think Americans are asking, "Okay, the violence is down, but what are we looking at, 2, 3, 4 years down the road? Can we see further troops withdrawn, and can we see a stable Iraq?"

Give us your best judgment, based on your experience and the number of times you've been over there—I don't know how many, but quite a few—give us your best judgment of what we can expect to achieve and what kind of result might occur if we follow the Petraeus recommendations.

General KEANE. Yes. Thank you, Senator.

I understand some frustration. I mean, our leaders coming before this panel are reluctant to cast too much of a crystal ball, here, into the future, because they also know that previous leaders have done that, and have lost credibility in doing it, because of events that are not controllable sometimes in Iraq, and so, I understand that.

But, when I look at this situation, we have really turned a corner here, and the strategy is working. The security situation that we all wanted to have has enabled the Maliki Government to make some genuine political progress with reconciliation. I mean, that is actually happening, and I know that for a fact, because I talked to the people who are the beneficiaries of that. So that, I am convinced of.

Now, there's still a check in the mail with some of that, to be sure, because we have more implementation of the national legislation to take place. But, the big decision has been made by the Maliki Government, and that is that the Sunnis and the Sunni leadership, they know, is going to be a part of the fabric of their government and the fabric of Iraq, and they understand that, despite the fact that many of those Sunnis repressed them for 35 years. This has been a difficult psychological, emotional hurdle for them to get over. There are still residue of paranoia and fears there as a result of it, to be sure.

But, when I look at this situation, we will finish al Qaeda this year in the north. The situation in the south, despite the serious Iranian influence, we do have to deal with the Shiite militias and bring the level of violence down, regardless of who those militias are. That will happen. It's not as formidable a task as dealing with al Qaeda and a Sunni insurgency. That will happen in 2008, as well. I think the intent is certainly to drive that so that in the fall of this year, the elections all over Iraq, but particularly in areas where there's still violence, that the elections in the south will be a free and open election and people will be able to express themselves. That, I think, is a very attainable goal.

In my own mind, I don't think we should probably reduce forces any more in 2008 than the 25 percent we're going to take, but if General Petraeus thinks that we can do more because the situation has improved dramatically, so be it. My judgment tells me that's not going to be the case.

However, in 2009 I do think we'll continue to reduce our forces, and I believe that probably late 2009 or 2010, the mission for our forces in Iraq—and this is important—will change. We will not be

protecting the people, which absorbs a lot of force levels. The ISFs will be doing that. Our mission will transition to one of assisting and training them, and no longer protecting the people. That brings the force levels down rather significantly, and also the casualties are changed; if there is still violence in Iraq, it will be at a level that the ISFs can handle.

Now, I don't believe this is an open-ended commitment to Iraq. I think what should be open-ended to Iraq is our political alliance with them and the fact that we do want to have a long-term security relationship with Iraq, but certainly we don't need to have forces in Iraq at the levels that we're at now on some open-ended contract. The conditions on the ground are going to change favorably that will permit us to continue to reduce our forces.

Now, does that come close to what you were seeking, sir?

Senator SESSIONS. Well, it certainly does. Would you say then, that with regard to withdrawal, DOD, General Petraeus, actually, and certainly Members of Congress, would like to see our troops withdrawn? The debate is over what rate, perhaps, or just how fast, and, really, how much of a gap do we have between the competing visions politically that we're hearing about on the question of withdrawal, in your opinion?

General KEANE. Well, I agree with that. I think much of the discussion has to do with the pace and the rate of reducing our forces. It's a given we're going to reduce our forces. General Petraeus knows that, Ambassador Crocker knows that. But, they want to do it on a measured basis, they want to do it based on the Iraqis' capability to take over, and also the enemy situation on the ground. That's reasonable, in my judgment, and particularly in view of the mistakes that we have made in the past in this area. Certainly they are influenced by those mistakes. I think it's prudent that the command comes before you and say they want to err on the side of caution here, and they want to take a measured approach to this, and they want to take a pause, and consolidate and evaluate where we are.

Nobody in Iraq knows what the impact of the 25-percent reduction of our combat forces will be. To give you a sense of it, in Baghdad we will go from 30 U.S. battalions to 20. A third of the U.S. battalions will be gone. That's happening as we speak. In Anbar Province, we will go from 15 U.S. battalions to 6. Now, anybody looking at that knows that's a significant military reduction. We believe that the Iraqis will mitigate that, in terms of their own capabilities. We also believe that, because of the Sons of Iraq program and the Sunni insurgency, and the leaders who are helping us, that that is another mitigation. Those things should hold and permit us to make that reduction without any increase in violence; actually, with the violence going down. That's the goal. But, nobody knows for sure if that's going to happen.

So, I think it's prudent for General Petraeus to say, "Look, I want to see what's going on, here. I want to see if those assumptions we're making are holding," and make certain of that before we take what could be unacceptable risks and reduce our forces further. I think that's what this is about. What they're doing makes sense to me.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you very much, all of you. The surge was a bitter pill for us. We were hoping we were on a downward trend at that point, but the success of the surge has exceeded our expectations to date. I thank you for your projections of the future, I think sometimes our military leaders are afraid to give theirs because it looks like they can't be certain; they don't want to be accused of being a liar if they turn out to be incorrect. Thank you for your experience and your advice.

Senator REED. Senator Ben Nelson.

Senator BEN NELSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Keane, the transition you're talking about is very comparable to what Senator Collins and I and others have proposed with the transition from providing security in Baghdad at the level we've been providing it, doing it alone, but by bringing in the al-Maliki Government security forces to provide more of their own security to transition, so that we can put more combat troops in the north, and we would have had, if we had done this previously, more combat troops in the south, which probably would have avoided what happened. While we commend Prime Minister al Maliki for standing up to the militias in the south, we wish that the result had been better at the beginning, and perhaps it will work out over time.

But, couldn't we be beginning that process of transitioning now? Aren't we, in effect, doing it? Why don't we admit that we are, in effect, doing that, and, at the same time, build toward the residual force, so we know what we can do? Wouldn't that be a better way of planning what the future in Iraq is? The conditions on the ground would dictate how fast you can go, and the commanders on the ground can make the decisions so that we don't arbitrarily set dates, but can't we at least begin and ask for a planning process that would start the transition as soon as possible, in my opinion, now?

General KEANE. The transition has begun, Senator.

Senator BEN NELSON. Then we had the resistance to Nelson-Collins type of legislation, which said that that's what we should be doing, and we proposed that a year ago?

General KEANE. I think that the command does not want to be tied down by any timetable.

Senator BEN NELSON. We didn't have a timetable.

General KEANE. They don't want to be tied down for when missions have to change.

Senator BEN NELSON. We didn't put that, either.

General KEANE. They want maximum flexibility because they're dealing with an enemy, and the enemy has a vote on what we're doing.

But, in terms of transition, to be clear here, we have places in Iraq, a number of them, where the Iraqis are clearly in the lead now, and we are in a supporting role, and we have made those transitions. That will be a gradual transition.

Now, they want to be measured about this, because we've made mistakes about this in the past. It's easy to get impressed with your own plan and to start seeing results that may not be there, and that's happened to us. So, these commanders know that, and

they go through a very detailed evaluation of what the Iraqis military capability is. They are transitioning them.

Senator BEN NELSON. That's why we've said that the forces on the ground and conditions on the ground would dictate how fast this would go without a timetable. But, we've had resistance to the legislation, which has absolutely surprised me, because the only timetable that we put in there was that the transition should begin immediately and have goals to be achieved over some period of time, but conditions and commanders on the ground would dictate when and how and under what circumstances. I guess I was puzzled then, and I'm puzzled now, as to what the opposition was to our bill.

I'd like to go to questions. Dr. Bacevich, I believe you said that Iran is a mischiefmaker. But, in terms of Hezbollah and Hamas and what they've been able to do in the region, at what point are mischiefmakers very successful in providing terrorism, at least within the region? Are we understating their impact when we say mischiefmakers, or do we have to say that they're full-fledged terrorists supporting state-sponsored terrorists for the region?

Dr. BACEVICH. Senator, I'll stick with mischiefmaker, but I don't mean to imply they are trivial, or be dismissed or ignored; I don't mean that at all. I understand the importance of noting their support for terrorist organizations, but those organizations don't pose anything remotely like an existential threat to the United States of America.

Senator BEN NELSON. Well maybe not existential, but in terms of the turmoil of the Middle East, it does have an impact on us in many respects. Maybe, perhaps, it's not existential.

Dr. BACEVICH. Yes, sir. Again, I'm not trying to suggest ignoring that, but it does seem to me that one needs to take a broader view of Iran than simply to say that this is a country that supports Hezbollah and Hamas. This is a country that, as I said earlier, has failed in its effort to sponsor the spread of revolution. It's a country that does have serious national security considerations. We cannot ignore the history, Iran does have reason to view the United States as something other than a friendly democracy wishing the people of Iran well. So, I would not want the fact—and it is a fact—of their support for Hezbollah and Hamas to somehow act as kind of a veto or the determinant of what U.S. policy toward Iran would be.

Senator BEN NELSON. General Keane, General Shinseki advocated that a larger force would be necessary to go into Iraq, and that advice was not followed. If that advice had been followed and a larger force had been placed in Iraq at the very beginning, and had been maintained there at higher levels, would there have been a need for the surge?

General KEANE. Yes, because there was much more of a problem than just force level. Now, to be quite accurate, General Shinseki's comments about size of force, actually, before this committee, as you probably know——

Senator BEN NELSON. Yes, I was here.

General KEANE. —and a result of Senator Levin's questioning of him, and it had to do with the size of the force to provide stability

and support operations in what was called phase 4, after the invasion, just to be specific about it.

Senator BEN NELSON. Okay.

General KEANE. One of the things I think we did, as military leaders—and I was there at the time—is, I think we let down the Secretary of Defense and also the administration, in the sense that when we were dealing with the invasion plans that General Franks was putting together, none of us, and particularly the ground leaders, who have a little bit more sense of this, challenged the possibility that Saddam Hussein could choose not to surrender and to continue to fight us through other means. If we had done that, that would have caused us to think through the assumptions of what that is, the nature of that war, and then what kind of a force would we need after the invasion if such a thing occurred. I think it also would have spun us up on a lot of what we had forgotten about this kind of war itself. We would not have stopped Saddam from doing it. We've talked to all of his leaders; we have them in detention. We know that 6 months prior to the invasion they were making those plans, now. But, the fact is we would have been better prepared for it when it did occur, and maybe we would not have made as many policy mistakes that first year that we made. I mean, we still suffer from that incredible sequence of major policy errors that we made in the first year, and I think possibly we could have been in better shape for all of that.

I think we bear some responsibility, ourselves. It's a shared responsibility, civilian and military leaders, certainly when it comes to war plans and execution of national policy. But, in the same respect, this is our lane, and we know a lot about it, and I don't think we did as good a job here as we could have.

Senator BEN NELSON. Mr. Chairman, if I could just follow up on that.

I remember, in a closed session, before the invasion of Iraq, asking Secretary Feith to give us some indication of what plans were in place to keep security if, in fact, the decision has been made to go in, or it hasn't been made and it is ultimately made to go into Iraq. What is the plan for phase 2? I received a stack of papers sometime, I think, in August, after phase 2 was obviously not succeeding because we weren't prepared to help them keep the peace, we had fired the military, and things were in shambles.

General KEANE. Yes. That doesn't surprise me.

Senator BEN NELSON. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator REED. Senator Collins.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It seems to me that the question that we're all facing is: Will the pause in the drawdown of troops after July allow for continued progress, or does it ease the pressure on the Iraqis to continue to take over more responsibility for their own security and to continue to meet the political and economic benchmarks that everyone agrees are essential for the long-term stability of Iraq? So, I'd like to ask each of you your judgment on that question. What is the impact of the pause of not continuing to drawdown in a gradual and responsible way, but, rather, holding back? There's a lot that's going to occur during that period if it goes beyond the 45 days that

General Petraeus indicated is likely, yesterday. We run into, for example, the provincial elections that are going to occur in October, if they occur as scheduled. So, I'd like to get an assessment from each of you on what you believe the consequences of the pause will be.

We'll start with you, Doctor.

Dr. BACEVICH. Well, the pause is not a policy. The pause is really just a way of avoiding, I think, or deferring, fundamental policy decisions. But, I have to say, I personally don't think that the pause will matter much, one way or the other. I say that because this is, I think, one of the areas where General Keane and I would just radically disagree with one another—I don't believe that we're really in charge in Iraq. I don't really believe that the efforts that are being made by U.S. officials or U.S. commanders to promote reconciliation really are shaping the course of events. I think events are much more likely to be shaped by the Iraqis themselves, and, again, not to repeat myself, that the various groups in Iraq are responding to their own particular agendas, so that, in the larger sense, Iraq is going to follow a trajectory that's going to be determined by Iraqis. The notion that staying a little bit longer or slightly accelerating the rate of U.S. withdrawal, or pausing the rate of withdrawal, is going to make a major difference strikes me as simply a fundamental misreading of the situation.

If there is one thing that the Iraq war ought to have taught us, it is that American power is far more limited than we imagined back in the salad days of the 1990s, when we were proclaiming that we were the world's only superpower, an indispensable nation. It ought also have taught us that our capacity to understand these societies, to understand the dynamics that sort of shape the way they evolve, is not all that great.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you.

General Keane?

General KEANE. Yes. I think it certainly is a temporary situation. In my own view, its intended purpose will be accomplished. General Petraeus will be given the opportunity to assess whether the ISFs are able to mitigate the reduction that's taking place and, therefore, take over responsibilities that heretofore we had. Also, the so-called Sons of Iraq program, in terms of its viability; is that still supporting our efforts? That will take some time to understand that. I think it probably takes longer than 45 days.

I also think, Madam Senator, that we should prepare for the likelihood that we may not resume reductions, in 2008, which, in my view, may be the case. Why is that? We want to reduce, so why does that make any sense? Well, the fact of the matter is, we have three major events that are occurring in 2008 that we're very much involved in, two military and one political.

One is, we want to finish al Qaeda off, up in Mosul. We think we will do that in a number of months, and actually we think it'll probably be completed around the fall timeframe. But, there are variables there. The enemy has a vote. We will finish them, but it may take longer. Our judgment is, it will not.

The operation in the south, which is just beginning, and let me say that, we can be so super-critical of military operations. You heard General Petraeus say that the operation in the south in

many of the provinces that the ISFs performed very well; and in some of them, they did not, and it was uneven. So, we know enough about this ISF to know that their improvement has been very steady, and, overall, they're going to acquit themselves well in what they are doing, in my view. But, it will take some time. As I said before, this is not al Qaeda, and this is not mainstream Sunni insurgents we're dealing with. We have to shut down the level of violence and the gangs and the thugs down there, and I believe a lot of them are going to run from the force levels that we will apply. That should be completed before the fall election, which is what Maliki's motivation is, here. But, it may not.

Then we have the fall election itself. This is a watershed political event in Iraq that will change Iraq for years to come, because this Maliki Government that everyone is kicking is willing to share power and decentralize some of its authority with those provinces, which means those provinces will have real budgets, money will have to be distributed, there'll be a percentage and a framework to do all of that, and there will be significant demands being placed on a central government by those provincial leaders, who are duly elected by the people in those provinces. We want that watershed political event to succeed. Our opponents in Iraq will want it to fail, and we cannot let that happen. We don't even want it to be delayed. We don't want it to go into 2009. That watershed experience is important to us. So, that's the third major thing that we have to do in 2008. During this, General Petraeus and his commanders are assessing the impact of the 25-percent combat force reduction.

So, I think, in my own mind, we should not be too optimistic that: (1) he will be able to do that assessment in a short period of time; or (2) that, as a result of his assessment, he's going to come back and say that he's going to continue to reduce forces in 2008. I think the plate is very full for us in 2008, and we are taking a fair amount of risk with the 25-percent reduction that's already ongoing.

That's the most frank answer I can give you. Does that answer your question, Senator?

Senator COLLINS. It does. Thank you.

Dr. Malley?

Dr. MALLEY. Senator, as I said in my testimony, I believe in pressure. I believe we have to pressure the Maliki Government, and I also believe that probably the most potent form of pressure we have is the question of our troops.

That said, I'm not a big believer in subtle signals; I much prefer blunt language. I'm not sure that whether we pause or don't pause, as has been said earlier, is really going to convey the message we want to convey. We don't know how Maliki would read the pause or a further withdrawal. We don't know how he would react or how other Iraqis might react. Would they see it as a signal that we're actually serious about withdrawing, and therefore, try, perhaps, to find other allies elsewhere? Would, on the contrary, they see this as a reason to take more responsibility?

As I said, a signal such as this, I think, is going to get lost in translation. I think there needs to be blunt language, a clear message to Maliki, not that we're withdrawing 25 percent or more, but,

"We cannot stay if you don't take certain steps," and we should be clear about what those steps are: passing and then implementing certain legislation; cleaning up some of the security sector that has been infiltrated by sectarian groups; and reaching out to some of the Sunnis who are looking for jobs; those are the concerned citizens. We should have clear tests for reaching a broad national compact. If he doesn't do them, then we should say, and we should be clear about it, "Then our troops cannot stay, because then you're asking us to stay for an enterprise that has no end and that has no purpose." But, I'm not a big believer in subtle signals, at this point.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Senator Collins.

In 5 years of effort and extraordinary sacrifice by our service men and women, there are some, I think, strategic consequences that are becoming more palpable. One, ironically, is that we replaced a despicable government in Baghdad, but an implacable foe of the Iranians, with a government that is very friendly to the Iranians personally, politically, culturally, and religiously. So, General Keane, if our national need is to define a strategy to defeat Iran in Iraq, how do we do it with the present Government of Maliki, which is extremely sympathetic and personally connected to the Iranian Government? Do we replace them with a Sunni Government? Do we replace them at all? What do we do?

General KEANE. Well, I think it's a good question, and a reasonable one.

First of all, this government will be replaced through a general election, in any event, in less than 2 years. I'm talking about the Maliki coalition.

Second, it's been, I think, very fascinating to watch Maliki since he took office, and the weakness of his coalition and the growth of him in that office. Listen, it's been frustrating for our people who deal with it. Much of it's two steps forward and one back, and then one forward and two back, to be sure.

Maliki is a realist, like the other national leaders are. Iran is a neighbor, they're always going to be there. The fact is, the United States is not always going to be there. That is probably a harsh reality.

The point is also, and this sometimes is lost, they are Iraqi nationalists, and they feel very strongly about that. They do not want to be in bed with the Iranians. They do not want the Iranians to have undue influence in their country. They do not want the Iranians using leverage and the assault that they've made on the south—politically, diplomatically, and economically—to have that kind of influence on the central government.

Now, they also have relations with Iran, and that's to be sure, and they have ties to it. Some of them lived in Iran during the terrible periods of Saddam Hussein. But, at the end of the day, my view is, they are nationalists, they clearly want to be aligned with the United States of America, they clearly want a long-term security relationship with the United States of America. They believe their future is with us in that region. At the same time, they want to have good relationships with their neighbors, and Iran is one of them.

Senator REED. Dr. Malley, your comments? You seem to suggest that that might be incompatible to some degree.

Dr. MALLEY. I would certainly agree with your comments. I think we do have, today, a policy that's at war with itself. I don't understand how we could be saying, on the one hand, that Iran is the major threat to Iraq—which it may be; I'm not going to argue that point, one way or another—but that our allies in Iraq view themselves as very closely tied to Iran. You described it very well, that there are so many ways in which, in particular, Mr. Hakim and his party were born, bred, and flourished in Iran. So, the notion that we now have a part of the Shiites turning against the Iranians by turning against Muqtada al Sadr, I think, is just wrong. You have both sides that are supported by Iran.

Again, if you look at the case of Lebanon, that's not unique. Both Hezbollah and Amal were supported by Iran, and at some point they were at war with one another, and Iran played one against the other, and sometimes mediated.

But the notion that this is what's happening now, that the Maliki Government is disentangling itself from Iran, I think, is wrong. Again, I think that's why, ultimately, we're going to have to find some accommodation with Iran, or at least we're going to have to try. I don't want to sound Pollyannaish. It may be that our interests are too incompatible. But we're going to have to go to the source, we're going to have to try, because right now we have a government in Iraq in which we are investing huge sums and military personnel that is allied with the party we say is threatening our interests in the region and our interests in Iraq more than anyone else.

Senator REED. I want to ask Dr. Bacevich the same question, but I want to follow up quickly with just another question. If the Maliki Government is successful in suppressing the Sadr militias, which they view as their threat from the Shiite side, would they turn their attention to Sunni militias? Would they turn their attention to try to reduce these Concerned Local Citizens (CLC) groups that we're sponsoring, either directly or overtly? Or would the CLCs see themselves as being under undo pressure now that a militia group has been successfully eliminated from the scene?

Dr. MALLEY. Well, first, I actually don't believe in the suppression of the Sadrist militia. I think it's a social phenomenon as much as a military one, and it has far deeper roots, incidentally, than either Maliki or Hakim has. I think we're seeing that, just in the reaction to the events in Basrah.

Senator REED. Which means, if there was a free and open election, they'd do pretty well?

Dr. MALLEY. This brings me to a very important point about the elections. Part of what's happening now may well be an effort by Maliki and Hakim to make sure that those elections either don't take place, because there's too much chaos, or are postponed, or against someone, because you disenfranchise the Sadrists, the Sadrists can't compete. I don't know any expert who doesn't believe that the Sadrists are going to do much better in this election than ISCI will.

Senator REED. But the question about going out to the Sunni community?

Dr. MALLEY. It's a good question. I don't know the answer to that. I think what may well happen is, the Sunni community, if it doesn't see, in the government and Maliki and his allies, steps that it believes are necessary to reach a compact they may turn. Right now, they've decided the greater enemy is al Qaeda, and they could postpone the fight against the government. Once al Qaeda's out of sight, or once they believe that the U.S. is not putting enough pressure on the Maliki Government or on Iran, they may turn their sights to the government and to the Shiite militias.

Senator REED. Dr. Bacevich, the same vein. You made the point, which I must confess I agree with, that the template for this operation was the transformation of Iraq as a beacon of freedom and free-market economics that would essentially propagate almost automatically throughout the region. I think, at this juncture, that's not the case. What seems to be emerging is a much more powerful Iran with a long-term, not only interest, but staying power. In fact, I think comments, even of General Keane, are correct that their staying power is probably as strong or stronger than ours, because of their proximity and their self-interests. Why don't you comment on that line of questioning.

Dr. BACEVICH. I think General Keane's made the key point, wherein he was referring to the long run. I think in trying to understand the way the Iraqi/Iranian relationship is likely to evolve, we should look to the long run. The long run is that an Arab nation is not going to want to be a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Persians.

It seems to me that, at least on the fringes, one of the justifications offered by those who want to continue the war is that for us to change course at this point would give a big win to the Iranians. I think there's no question that the Iranians have done well as a consequence of our blunders. But if you look at the long run, I would expect that Iraq is going to serve as some kind of a counterweight to Iran, and that's going to be in the interests of the stability of the region, and probably will be in the interests of the United States, as well.

Senator REED. Thank you very much. My time's expired.

Chairman LEVIN [presiding]. Senator Warner.

Senator WARNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I welcome this distinguished panel. Very many have profited by your, I think, very sage and wise comments this morning.

I want to start off with our good friend, General Keane. I have before me a transcript of the hearings before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Readiness and Management Support Subcommittee, and General Cody, who was your successor as the Vice Chief, said as follows, "The current demand for forces in Iraq and Afghanistan exceeds our sustainable supply of soldiers, of units and equipment, and limits our ability to provide ready forces for other contingencies." Do you agree with that?

General KEANE. I don't want to get into a contest with Dick Cody, who I have tremendous regard for.

Senator WARNER. No, that's the purpose you're here, to get into these——

General KEANE. No, you know me, I'm always going to give you a straight answer, Senator.

Senator WARNER. All right. Well, let's have it.

General KEANE. I'm just sort of warming up to it a little bit, all right? [Laughter.]

Senator WARNER. Well, I'm cold steel, and I want to get the answers.

General KEANE. I mean, I'm talking about a friend, as well as a colleague.

Yes, there's an element of truth in that statement, certainly, but here's my view of it. The United States Army is certainly stressed by this war. We're fighting two wars, and it's understandable that it would be, as we have always been in wars of consequence that take time. That's number one.

Number two is, the Chief of Staff of the Army is on record saying that he can sustain 13 combat brigades almost indefinitely, and I agree with that. Now, at what price would that be remains to be seen. I believe this force is tough and resilient, and they're going to continue to make the commitment to volunteer and be a part of it.

In terms of other missions, here's where I come out on that. First of all, the Air Force and the Navy are largely not involved. The Army and the Marine Corps are very much involved. If we had an emergency someplace else, that would require all non-engaged Army and Marine Corps to respond, regardless of deployments, because it is an emergency. That would depend, for the Army, on the availability of equipment as much as it is the availability of people. Nonetheless, I am convinced they would be able to respond.

Then you get to this other question that's always been troubling to me, the implication of that is that we should do something about our involvement in Iraq or in Afghanistan, and particularly Iraq, because that's really the contentious issue. What we should do is, out of consideration for what General Cody is speaking about—and I'm not suggesting he suggested this—but the implication is that what we need to do is pull our troops out of Iraq so we'll be ready in the event something else happens. That makes no sense to me.

Senator WARNER. I think we're getting astray, here. It's a fairly straightforward, clear pronouncement of a man who is in a position to make those judgments. I draw to your attention, and I'll ask unanimous consent to place it in the record, here a statement by the current Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mullen, perhaps you're aware of that statement, took the same basic conceptual thought. He is concerned about other contingencies around the globe, which, at this time, in his professional judgment, require deployment of additional U.S. forces.

Chairman LEVIN. It will be placed in the record.

[The information referred to follows:]

What immediately comes to mind is additional forces for Afghanistan. I've said Afghanistan is an economy-of-force campaign and there are force requirements there that we can't currently meet. So, having forces in Iraq don't—at the level they're at—don't allow us to fill the need that we have in Afghanistan.

Equally broadly around the world, there are other places we would put forces—or capabilities, not so much brigade combat teams as other kind of enabling capabilities or small training teams, that we just can't because of the pressure that's on our forces right now in the Central Command. I think we'll continue to be there until, should conditions allow, we start to be able to reduce our force levels in Iraq.

Senator WARNER. We'll have the Secretary of Defense and Admiral Mullen tomorrow, but I just wanted to get your views on that.

Dr. Bacevich, I listened to you, and I agree 100 percent, we're not in control in Iraq. When I look back at World War II, my recollection is, we went into these areas that we conquered, Germany and so forth, we declared martial law and took charge and ran it until such time as they manifested the capability to go out and establish their governments. The transition was fairly smooth.

Here, we roared in under the concept of democracy, and planted the democracy tree, and elections were held, and the rest is history. I think the Maliki Government does pretty much as it pleases, in my judgment; and that's regrettable. I don't suggest that our Department of State and DOD aren't trying to do everything possible to leverage that government to accelerate political reconciliation.

I happen to have a personal thesis. If suddenly the Iraqi people and this government awaken to the fact that if we stopped our internecine fighting, went down and began to produce the natural resources in this country, and take the funds from those natural resources and rebuild our cities, you could create an Iraq which would be the envy of the whole Middle East, in terms of structure and education and medicine and care for its people. But, we're in this deadlock of these centuries-old animosities and hatred between these people, riddled with corruption, and it's difficult.

I commend our forces, the men and women of the Armed Forces and their families. They have taken a tremendous sacrifice to give the Iraqi people this chance. We haven't given up on trying to make it come through.

General Keane, I was interested, you just referred to the south, and you called the groups down there a bunch of thugs and so forth. I agree with you. This is what troubles me about the way we conduct these hearings and the terms that we use. We have to remember, they go out of here, and the media, in large measure, accurately transmits what's said.

I grew up in a generation which I knew what, basically, an army was. An army is composed of a divisional headquarters, a series of, in the old days, regiments, now you have your combat teams and whatever it is, battalions, and on down. We keep calling this the Mahdi army. General Keane, it's not an army, by any means of the interpretation and the use of that term which has been used for decades. Am I correct?

General KEANE. Which army, Senator?

Senator WARNER. We call Sadr's outfit the Mahdi army. It's not an army, it's a disparate bunch of people that he's cobbled together through spiritual inspirations, and they're fighting. It's not an army. They don't have a divisional headquarters, they don't have regiments, and they don't have training areas. I mean, what is it that we're fighting over there?

General KEANE. That's one of the factions in the south, certainly, is the JAM.

Senator WARNER. Right. We call it the Mahdi army.

General KEANE. Which is the military side of his Organization of the Martyr Sadr. I've never referred to it as an army. There's good and bad parts to it. There's real thugs and killers in that, and some of them have been directly fighting U.S. forces present in Iraq, and

there's others that are defensive militia, who are there to protect the people on the streets.

Senator WARNER. But, here's my difficulty. We have spent 5 years training the Iraqi army, and this committee has put untold authorizations out for whatever was needed to do it. We now have a couple of hundred thousand Iraqi soldiers. There they are. They have training camps, practice ranges, armaments, everything. They're fighting this group, call it what you want, the Mahdi army and these other militias, which don't have any of that infrastructure. Yet, what they seem to have is a will to fight and die. Therein is their secret weapon and the thing that's making it effective, as we're struggling, the coalition forces, and so forth, against those people.

Now, how do you describe that will to fight?

General KEANE. Well, I think that's true in some of the people that we've been fighting. Certainly, al Qaeda has reflected that will, some of the Sunni mainstream insurgents had that kind of determination, and certain members of the Shiite extremists have it, particularly those in the special groups that have been trained in Iran and are further committed. They have a low-tech system, certainly, that's being used against the most powerful military in the world, and this is classic insurgency business, here. The fact of the matter is that they use the people to shield them and to protect them, and that is why the change in strategy that we brought to Iraq recently has worked so well. That's how you defeat them, Senator. You don't defeat them just by killing them, you defeat them by isolating them from the people, so the people themselves reject them.

Senator WARNER. Then I think we should stop calling them the Mahdi army.

Dr. BACEVICH. May I comment, Senator?

Senator WARNER. Yes.

Dr. BACEVICH. I think a more accurate term would be militia.

Senator WARNER. That's correct. Militia.

Dr. BACEVICH. Which is also frequently used. The term is apt. A militia really is the people armed.

Senator WARNER. That's the concept of this country itself. In the 1700s, we had militias.

Dr. BACEVICH. Yes, sir. When you think of our history, and the fact that, in many respects, the forces that collected around Boston in 1775 in the aftermath of Lexington and Concord, the people armed were a militia.

Senator WARNER. They coalesced into George Washington's army.

Dr. BACEVICH. Yes, sir, but it's the militia men, a militia is very difficult to extinguish. One can imagine that, through the use of conventional military power, you have defeated a militia, when, in fact, all you've done is disperse it until it gathers to fight another day. I personally fear that, to some degree, what we see to be the recent success in Iraq is simply that the militia has gone to ground or, for its own reasons has chosen to stop fighting for now, and they'll be back tomorrow.

Senator WARNER. But, they do have an unusual will to fight. They fight with less armaments, less protection, and less equip-

ment. But they fight, and that's what we're experiencing down there.

Dr. BACEVICH. Yes, sir.

Senator WARNER. It's just tragic that we had 1,000 Iraqi soldiers—that's what was reported—defect in the heat of battle down in this Basrah situation the other day. I'm just wondering, does anybody know about what accountability any of those officers have been held to, and what Maliki's doing about it?

General KEANE. May I just comment on that, Senator?

Senator WARNER. Yes.

General KEANE. I mean, there were 15,000 troops involved in that operation.

Senator WARNER. Right.

General KEANE. Most of those defections came from the malign police force. I was down there 2 weeks ago talking to the police chief, a former army division commander by the name of Jalil. Very good soldier. I said, "What's your problem?" and he said, "My biggest problem, General, is that 80 percent of my police force is maligned with some form of militia or another, and I can't trust them. If we try to do anything down here that requires police support," he said, "they're going to roll on me. They will align themselves with their militia."

Now, that is part of those 1,000 that took place there, and there was also some problems with some of the army forces that went into Basrah. But, the overwhelming majority of the forces did not defect.

Senator WARNER. Performed quite well.

General KEANE. Some of their performance was uneven. This is pretty typical of the Iraqi army. Now, when they're with us and partnering with us, they do very well. A number of them have been able to perform independent operations, and there's been a lot of progress there.

So, don't take that little headline and make it something worse than what it really is because it's not.

Senator WARNER. No, I fully recognize it was a relatively small thing. But, it is significant.

One last point, and I'll give up my time, here.

I grew out of a generation of World War II. I claim no personal glory myself, but I saw that. Sixteen million men and women were trained to fight in that 5-year period. We've now crossed that with Iraq. Those units were trained, and they were ready to go into battle in 6 or 7 months. We've been training these Iraqis for 5 years. I just cannot understand how we can continue to accept, "Oh, well, they've just begun, and they're just doing this." Five years of investment, giving them, as far as I know, every possible economic support that they needed to do that.

Dr. MALLEY. May I comment on that?

Senator WARNER. Yes.

Dr. MALLEY. I think it brings me back to your former question. I think what the Mahdi militia has, which the army doesn't have, or many parts of the army don't have, is loyalty to a cause, and which is why they're prepared to die for it, which the army doesn't have, to a large extent. It's not a matter of military training, it's a political question. Do they have something they're loyal to? Are

they loyal to their sect? Are they loyal to their profession? Or are they loyal to a central state that's viewed as legitimate? Until you reach that threshold, I think you're going to find the same frustration that you've found, and you're going to compare them unfavorably to those members of a militia that have a real cause and a real will to fight for it.

General KEANE. I disagree with some of that. The ISFs, and particularly the army, have made significant progress. They are extraordinary in battle. They display tremendous courage. We have not had a refusal of a major unit in Iraq in some time. The only problem we've had is just recently in Basrah, and a lot of that had to do with police, as opposed to army forces.

There's tremendous will to fight in that force. In my last visit to Iraq, I did not find a single battalion or brigade commander who did not point out to me an Iraqi unit that they were proud of and thought they could fight on their own. That was different than visits in 2007. This slope may not be fast enough for any of us, but the slope is an improving slope, for sure.

I'm convinced that we're going to be able to transition to the Iraqis and bring our combat forces out of there, because they will have the capability to do that. But, we need a little bit more time to do it.

Senator WARNER. Well, everybody says, "We need a little bit more time." Can you definitize "need a little bit more time"?

General KEANE. As I said before, I think we'll make further reductions in 2009, below where we are right now.

Senator WARNER. Of U.S. forces?

General KEANE. In our forces, and then I think, probably in 2010, we'll transition our mission, which is no longer protect-the-people counterinsurgency, and we'll start to do more of training the ISFs, to finish the training that they need, and that would mean that they begin to take over much of the responsibilities that we have. This cannot be done overnight, but the progress is there. If we take the measured course that General Petraeus has laid out for us, I think it is very likely we're going to have a favorable outcome in Iraq.

Senator WARNER. My time is up.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Warner.

Senator Lieberman.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Thanks, to the witnesses.

I want to ask a few questions, General Keane, through this perspective, which you alluded to, which is, in the midst of all the controversy about the war, there's no one that really wants to stay there in a conflict forever. This is really, ultimately, a question of what pace do we withdraw our forces, and based on what standards, and, implicitly, what kind of condition do we leave behind?

So, with that context, I do want to ask you about a few of the arguments that we hear in this debate for essentially not following General Petraeus's counsel yesterday, leaving it to conditions on the ground, in his judgment, during this period of consolidation and evaluation, but pressing harder for an earlier withdrawal.

One is what Senator Warner was asking you about, I want to ask you to go back to it, which is stress on the Army. You have 37

years, yourself, of experience in the U.S. Army leadership, and you've kept very close to what's happening in Iraq. So, I want to invite you to go back to what you were saying, because there are people who say, because of the stress on the Army, we should be withdrawing more rapidly, almost regardless of conditions on the ground. As a matter of fact, I think people would say "regardless of conditions on the ground." I want you to work that through. How would you balance the stress on the Army against the mission we have in Iraq?

General KEANE. Well, certainly that premise, that because of the stress on the Army, which one would expect to have, and which we did have in all the major wars we have fought of consequence, and particularly those that were lengthy. In some of those wars, we actually broke the Army, because the purpose of that event was justified by that expenditure. That's the harsh reality of it.

In this case, national interests at stake, the security of the American people, I believe, are directly related to these two wars that we are fighting. So, it has purpose and meaning to us, regardless of what the motivation was to go in initially. Our Army is stressed by that, primarily because it is not large enough to be able to endure both of these conflicts.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Agreed.

General KEANE. We should realize that is the elephant in the room here with us, and never let go of that, and help these two institutions grow.

That said, I don't believe for a minute that what we should do is take risk in Iraq with our force-reduction program to relieve the stress on the Army or the Marine Corps. I don't know how risking a humiliating defeat in Iraq would ever help those two institutions maintain the viability that they need if they, in fact, have suffered a humiliating defeat. I was part of something like that, as a platoon leader and company commander coming out of the Vietnam war, and then as a major, watching us lose that war. The psychological and emotional impact on the officers and noncommissioned officers, the professional corps of the military, was very significant. We lost our way for a while, to be frank about it, and you know that.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Yes.

General KEANE. Nobody wants to be a part of a force like that.

The other thing is, this vague notion that we need the forces to do something else. What are we really talking about, here? Are we talking about Pakistan, with ground forces? I think not. Are we talking about the Pacific Rim, with ground forces? I think not. Are we talking about more forces for Afghanistan? Yes. Do we need more forces in Afghanistan? We do. That's true. I think those forces will be available for deployment in Afghanistan eventually, but not right now from the United States. Afghanistan, let's be frank about it, is a secondary effort compared to Iraq. Iraq has a higher priority.

Senator LIEBERMAN. I want to come to that with you in a minute. I agree with everything you've said. It seems to me that to risk a defeat based on the best counsel of our commanders on the ground, by accelerating the withdrawal of our forces from Iraq sooner than they advise because we need to have forces available for some pos-

sible potential speculative conflict somewhere else doesn't make any sense.

The second point is the one that Senator McCain, I think, was making in his earlier question, which is, yes, the Army is under stress, you're worried about breaking a force; but you can break a force, and probably more likely will break a force, by letting that force be defeated. The morale of our troops in Iraq today is very high. There is tremendous pride in what is being accomplished. If you want to break it, pull out the rug from under them.

I want to ask you to go to Afghanistan, because here is a second argument made for a congressionally-mandated accelerated withdrawal from Iraq, and I'll try to state the argument fairly, that we are essentially fighting the wrong fight, that we are engaged more deeply in the less consequential of the battlefields in the global war on terrorism in Iraq, and, as a result, we have taken our eye off the ball, we have lost our focus on the key battlefield, which is Afghanistan.

I know that you have visited Afghanistan and Pakistan. So, I want you to give me your response to the argument that we'd be better off taking troops out, regardless of conditions on the ground. I may be overstating the case; but regardless of the advice of commanders on the ground, to put them into Afghanistan as soon as possible, because that's the main event, regardless of what happens in Iraq.

General KEANE. Yes. Afghanistan certainly is important to us, and I would never want to diminish what we're trying to achieve there. We have problems in Afghanistan, but al Qaeda is not the central enemy in Afghanistan. What has taken place there is the Taliban have resurged, and they're trying to come back, and they've made some inroads in the south, and the government is very weak in the south. This is not of the crisis stage in Afghanistan that we were dealing with in Iraq in 2006, when al Qaeda and the Sunni insurgents created the bloodbath in Iraq and were threatening regime survival. That is the important distinction.

There is no threat to regime survival in Afghanistan. There is a problem in Afghanistan in the south. It is aided and abetted by the Pakistanis because there is a Taliban safe haven in Pakistan that we're all familiar with.

Two things can be done in Afghanistan. One is, eliminate that sanctuary, and two is, provide some additional forces in the south. I think that was the basis for the President's discussion at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the week before last, to get more forces to do that, and also for the additional marine forces.

Here's the other point I want to make. If we are talking about pressuring General Petraeus so that he provides another brigade or two for 2008, that would not be decisive in Afghanistan, but it could be very decisive in Iraq, in terms of what the consequences of that reduction could be.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Let me ask you a final question, just on that. My time's up, so I'm going to ask you to be as brief as you can. Take the argument on the other side of this to what I think is its logical conclusion. If we started to forcibly withdraw, or mandate a withdrawal of our troops from Iraq, risking defeat there, and, in fact, are defeated, and we do it because we want to focus

on Afghanistan, what would the effect on the war in Afghanistan be if, essentially, chaos developed in Iraq?

General KEANE. Well, I mean, certainly suffering a humiliating defeat is not going to help you prosecute another war with a similar adversary, nor does it help you with the relationship of our allies, who count on the United States to be there when they say they're going to be there. It certainly encourages our adversaries and the radical Islamists, and al Qaeda, in particular. But, also, I think one of the enduring qualities that we have about us is our reliability and our commitment, and we stick with them, even though there's a degree of difficulty, uncertainty, and sacrifice that's associated with it. There's no country in the world that has ever made the degree of sacrifices that we have made to help other beleaguered nations in the world. The record's extraordinary. To back away so that we could help another friend a number of miles away makes no sense to me, in terms of taking that kind of risk. It endangers the United States and puts us further at risk in the world.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thanks, General.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Lieberman.

Senator Graham.

Senator GRAHAM. Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this hearing. Number one, I thought you did an excellent job yesterday, as chairman. That was one of the best hearings I've attended.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Senator GRAHAM. It was thoughtful and full of difficult issues.

I really enjoy our discussions here, because people in decision-making capacities have to have some framework from which to work off of. I think one of the fundamental questions that I have to address, as a Senator, and where I want to go with this: Is Iraq part of a global struggle now, or a more isolated event? For us to come to grips with where to go, I think we have to come to grips with our failures.

General Keane, is it fair to say that the surge is corrective action being taken because of the past strategy failing?

General KEANE. Yes. Absolutely. We made a decision to transition to the ISFs, so they, in fact, could defeat the insurgency.

Senator GRAHAM. Right.

General KEANE. We never made the decision to defeat it ourselves.

Senator GRAHAM. Do the other two witnesses generally agree with that, that our first 4 years here were going backwards, not forward?

Dr. MALLEY. Yes.

Dr. BACEVICH. Yes, sir, I agree. But, beyond that, I think that the initial decision to invade Iraq was a mistake.

Senator GRAHAM. Well noted. But, I have to make a decision. I can't go back in time. If I could go back in time, there are a lot of things I would do differently. The first thing I would do is, when the Soviets left Afghanistan, I would have done things differently, because vacuums are going to be filled. That's the one thing I've learned, Dr. Malley, is that in this ideological struggle—and that's what it is; it's not a capital to conquer or a navy to sink or an air

force to shoot down, it's an ideological struggle. We paid a heavy price, I think, once the Soviets left, people filled in that vacuum. My biggest fear now, Dr. Bacevich, is that whatever mistake we've made in the past, the first job I have is not to compound that mistake. So, my premise is that we can have an honest disagreement about what we should have done, and I would argue a bit that leaving Saddam Hussein in power after ignoring 17 United Nations (U.N.) resolutions, given his history, is not a status quo event, that you can't go back in time and say, "We shouldn't have invaded," without some consequence, in terms of this regime that we replaced living off the Oil-for-Food Program. I don't think it was a static situation. I think very much that the U.N. would become a lesser body than it is today if you allow dictators like Saddam Hussein to constantly ignore them. But, that's a legitimate debate, and that debate's behind us.

Now, what to do now? The new strategy is a result from failure. The new strategy bought into the idea, as I understand it, General Keane, that the missing ingredient in Iraq was not a lethargic Iraqi people, indifferent to their fate, that was relying upon us to do everything, but an Iraqi people under siege that could not develop military capacity as they're being attacked and fought at the recruiting station, and an Iraqi Government that was under siege, where sectarian violence knocked politicians down. The way to break through, in terms of military capacity and political progress, was to provide better security. Is that the underpinning theory of the surge?

General KEANE. Yes, absolutely. The general election was held in December 2005, and constitutional referendum in October-November. Maliki was forming his government from January through the end of March 2006, when the Samarra Mosque bombing occurred, in February, with the single purpose and the intent to provoke the Shiite militias into an overreaction, as a result of that mosque bombing, to undermine the government. So, our problem that we had was a security situation, and the compromise that we had made in the past, of not putting security first as a necessary precondition to political and economic progress, had failed. We had to put security first.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, let's look forward. There are two points in time, from the fall of Baghdad to January 2007. I think any objective observer would say that strategy failed to produce results. Reconciliation is a word. If you look at other conflicts in history, you name the civil strife, whether it be religious-based or ethnically-based, there has to be a level of looking forward, versus backward.

Now, what's happened from January 2007 to the present day? I would argue, and I would like to hear your thoughts on this, that the amnesty law that's yet to be implemented, but about to be implemented, is a giant step forward, in this regard. It's the Shiites and the Kurds saying to the Sunnis that are in jail that took up arms against the new Iraq, against the Iraq where Shiites and Kurds would have a bigger say, 17,000 people have had their applications for amnesty approved, out of 24,000 who have applied. Is that not an act of sectarian forgiveness that is a precondition to reconciliation? Isn't that something that is a positive trend?

General KEANE. In my mind, that and other programs like it that the Iraqis are implementing is all about reconciliation. I don't believe we're going to have this national compact, as Dr. Malley is suggesting, of some kind of Kumbaya event.

Senator GRAHAM. Right.

General KEANE. That's not the way this is going to take place. This is a tribal society, and it's not going to work that way. This is significant, in what you are suggesting, and so is de-Baathification.

Senator GRAHAM. Now, I'm from South Carolina, so we know about civil war. It started in my State. So, we can't rewrite our history. All those struggles they're having in Iraq have been known to other people.

Now, let's talk about the provincial election law. If it becomes a reality, and I don't want to keep us here any longer, Mr. Chairman, but the point that gives me optimism now, versus before the surge, is that there has been some actions taken in Baghdad that are positive, in my opinion. The provincial election law was agreed to by all the major parties, and it's a chance to vote in October 2008. From what I can understand, based on my visits to Anbar, the Sunnis are going to take this opportunity, this time around, to participate in elections. To me, that is a statement by the Sunnis to the Shiites and the Kurds that there is a better way to relate to each other, "We're going to use the ballot box to send elected representatives to the provinces, and eventually to Baghdad." Isn't that a major step forward, a sea change in Sunni relationship to the central government and to the people at large?

General KEANE. It absolutely is. I had in my statement that a poll has been taken among the Sunnis, and they indicate that 90 percent of them will vote in the provincial elections, and a similar amount in the general election in 2009. So, what is that saying? That is saying that the Sunni people themselves are reconciling with the Government of Iraq. They want to participate in the political process. They know this is a Shiite-dominated government, but they want to enter that process. Overwhelmingly, the majority of the Sunni insurgent leaders are part of that process now.

Senator GRAHAM. Let's take the budget. Now, the one thing that Senator Levin and I have in common is that we understand the value of money in politics. Senator Levin is a very good representative for the State of Michigan, because Michigan gets their fair share, and I try to do the same for South Carolina. But, the $48-billion budget that was recently passed, to me, is a major move forward, simply because money, in politics, is power.

You're having the Sunnis and the Shiites and the Kurds agreeing to divide up the resources of the Nation. To me, that is a statement by each group that, "I am entitled to some of this money, but so are you." That is something that is encouraging. We're a long way from having this thing resolved the way we would like, but I would argue, General Keane, because of you and others, that we've turned it around, and that we're moving in the right direction.

From a political point of view, I can tell you, as a politician, when you share money with other people, you see value in the role they play.

So, I would just like to end this, Mr. Chairman, with the idea that better security has led to economic, political, and military progress, but for me to say that the war has been won and over would be a gross misstatement. I do believe we're going to leave, as you say, General Keane, here's what drives my train, gentlemen. I know, from a historical point of view, Dr. Malley, that I will not be judged by the date the troops came home. But, the people who follow behind me will judge me and others during this time in history by what we left behind in Iraq. I am confident that the only way we're going to win the war as a whole against radical Islam is defeat it where you find it. Al Qaeda was not in Iraq before we invaded, you're right, but they're there now. I do believe that one of the success stories of the last year and a half is that they have been punished. The Muslims in Iraq took up arms against al Qaeda, and anytime that happens, America and the world is safer. Does anyone disagree with that?

Dr. Bacevich?

Dr. BACEVICH. Sir, I hope this is one of these things where we can have an honest disagreement.

Senator GRAHAM. Absolutely, we can.

Dr. BACEVICH. I just don't share the optimism about reconciliation. What I would say is, if indeed everybody in Iraq is keen on reconciling, then let's get out of the way, let's let them reconcile and be able, therefore, to achieve the success.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you think we're standing in the way of them reconciling?

Dr. BACEVICH. I do think that, to some degree, our presence becomes an excuse, a crutch, something that different groups can use to play with.

Senator GRAHAM. I gotcha.

Dr. BACEVICH. To my mind, the insistence that we hear from General Petraeus about taking the pause, the counsel from General Keane about not being too hasty now and putting at risk anything that we've gained, all is suggestive of, perhaps, some doubts on their part that this reconciliation express train is moving quite that rapidly. That would be my concern.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, I think they have honest doubts. I don't know the eventual outcome. I see progress. But, my point was about the Anbar environment changing, where Iraqi Muslims rejected al Qaeda, apparently, and aligned with us. To me, that is a positive step in the overall war on terror. Do you agree?

Dr. BACEVICH. Yes, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.

General Keane? How significant is that?

General KEANE. Excuse me, sir?

Senator GRAHAM. How significant is what happened in Anbar vis-a-vis al Qaeda?

General KEANE. Oh, I think it's a stunning achievement, and very well appreciated in the Arab world, when you talk to people in other countries. It is the first time that a majority of people have rejected al Qaeda at the expense of their own lives. Essentially, that message is carried around the Arab Muslim world. When you pick up the traffic of al Qaeda themselves, they talk about it in terms of a defeat, themselves, by the Sunnis, "We've been defeated

by the Sunnis in Iraq." They're reluctant to admit, "The Americans are killing us," but, "We've been defeated by the Sunnis in Iraq."

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You've been more than generous with your time. Thank you very much.

Thank you, gentlemen, it's been a great discussion. You're helping our country. Thank you for coming.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Graham.

By the way, Dr. Malley, did you want to add anything?

Dr. MALLEY. Just on this process of reconciliation, I'd make two points.

I believe, as General Keane said, that reconciliation is not a moment, it's a process. My doubt is whether this Iraqi Government and its allies are seriously, genuinely engaged in that process. There are a number of laws, I would say some may be more optimistic about whether they're going to be implemented, and whether the implementation will be nonpartisan, as opposed to politicized, which happened to de-Baathification or to the amnesty law. My view is, we have to keep the government's feet to the fire and provide real pressure, which I haven't seen so far, to make sure that these steps are genuinely taken, rather than simply, "Let's sign a piece of paper, because that's what Vice President Cheney asked us to do, but the minute they turn around, we're going to do it our way."

Chairman LEVIN. That's the whole issue here. It's not whether or not we want to maximize chances of success in Iraq. Everybody wants to do that. The suggestion that the other side of the coin from the current policy is a dismal defeat in Iraq is ignoring the argument, which is made by at least two of our witnesses here today, I believe, that the way to maximize success in Iraq is to put pressure on the Iraqis to work out a political settlement.

Everybody agrees there's no military solution here. Everyone mouths the words, "There's no military solution." Some people mean it. Some people, I don't think really understand what they're saying. If there's no military solution here, then we have to force a political solution. Then the question is: How do you do it? That's where the big divide is; more and more troops, or keeping the troops there in the hope of creating some kind of an atmosphere where the politicians can work out a solution. That's what the supporters of the status quo and the current policy is. Those of us who feel that the only way to get a political solution is to force the politicians to reach a political solution by ending this open-ended commitment, which is clearly open-ended, there is no end that is projected for it; even this so-called pause, which, by definition, means a brief period. When you look up the term "pause" in the dictionary, it means a relatively brief period.

Yesterday, General Petraeus destroyed that idea, that the pause is going to be brief. What is it? Forty-five days, it's going to be examined, I think. That takes you to the middle of September. Then there is an indeterminate period to assess. No end in sight.

I even asked General Petraeus, yesterday, "What if things go well? Would you then say we will begin to reduce again?" He would not even say that. I said, "What if things go well by the end of the year? Can you then say we will start our reductions again then?" He would not make a commitment. It doesn't make any difference

to this policy whether things go well or things go terribly; the answer is the same, "Maintain your military presence," even though the consensus is, "There's no military solution."

Now, I think a majority of the American people do not want a precipitous withdrawal. That is also used by the supporters of the status quo, that, "The opponents of this policy want a precipitous withdrawal." No, they don't. They want a planned, careful, thought-out timetable that gives the Iraqi political leaders the opportunity to reach a political settlement. That is what has been proposed. That's what got 53 votes in the U.S. Senate. That's what has a majority vote in the House of Representatives. Not something which is precipitous, immediate, but something which has a plan to it, which ends this open-endedness which the Iraqi political leaders think they have a commitment to.

General, you said it shouldn't be open-ended. But, I don't see how the current policy is anything but open-ended. We had a statement by Secretary Gates, not too long ago, that it was his plan to continue these reductions after the surge. That's out the window. Then he said it would be a brief pause. That apparently is out the window. We had the President of the United States say that by the end of 2007 we would turn over the security of the country to the Iraqis. That's what he said would happen when he introduced the pause in early 2007. We have not turned over security in key areas. Obviously, we have, in peaceful areas. But, in the key areas, we have not.

I visited the north of Iraq, 3 weeks ago. In those 4 provinces up there, we were told that there were 110 combined operations in the previous 3 months. There were more Iraqi troops up there than American troops. Seventy percent, or 60 percent of the Iraqi troops were able to take the lead in a combined operation. That's the statistics which we've been given. So, there's as many Iraqi troops in those four provinces capable of taking the lead in combined operations as there are American troops. Yet in only 10 out of 110 combined operations did the Iraqis take the lead. That's 9 percent.

Economically, they are building up these huge surpluses. These incredible surpluses being built up at $100-a-barrel oil; 2 million barrels a day are exported by Iraq, and we're still paying for most of their reconstruction?

If you want to talk about dependency, that is what is continuing, here. It is a dependency on our presence and our money. Militarily, in those four provinces at least, we're still taking the lead 90 percent of the time, despite the ability of their troops to do so. Economically, we're still spending more for their reconstruction. Politically, we can talk all about these benchmarks having been met. No, they haven't been met. Most of the ones that have been, where the legislation has been adopted, depend on implementation. They have not, in many cases, been implemented yet.

Senator Graham talked about this provincial elections law. Well, there's a provincial power law, but there is not yet a provincial elections law. That depends upon the Iraqi legislative body acting. They have not yet acted to put into place the machinery that will allow those October 1 elections to take place.

I think you would all agree it's important that those elections do take place. I think everybody believes it's important that they take

place. But, there's a real question as to whether they will take place or not. I'm not saying that based on just my assessment, that's based on the assessments of those who have the responsibility to make these kinds of assessments.

So, all in all, what we come down to is not the question of whether or not it's important to, "leave Iraq in better condition than we found it," whether or not it's important that it be a stable place. I think everybody wants that. The question is whether or not the current course that we're on, with all of our eggs in the Maliki basket, and when he fights a different part of the Shiite community, we're with him.

We are right in the middle of a sectarian conflict. It was General Odierno, the other day, that called this an intercommunal struggle. Do you agree with that, General, this is an intercommunal struggle in Basrah?

General KEANE. Certainly, there are 42 different militia organizations in and around Basrah alone. But, you have to draw back from that and take a look at what really happened. We had no control there. The Brits pulled out of there 2 years ago, and militia groups took over and maligned the police force. So, what are we doing? We're going down there to provide security and control so that, yes, the political process can move forward. That's what it's about.

Chairman LEVIN. Yes, but we went down there, not because they followed our advice; despite our advice. General Keane, I think you used a term, which is a very interesting term I found, back, I think, a few days ago, when you said that Maliki is, "way in front of the military realities on the ground."

You acknowledge, and I think General Petraeus acknowledged, yesterday, it took a couple of times to ask him, and we're dragged in with Maliki.

General KEANE. But, Senator, what we're talking about here is probably a month or 2. That's the only difference. We have a campaign that's going to last a number of months to gain control of the southern provinces before the provincial election. General Petraeus was working on that plan, I believe, raising in front of the Iraqi leadership all of the issues in the south, as a result of the many meetings he was having, some of which he was having while I was there.

Chairman LEVIN. He lays out a plan which is thoughtful, which is building up pressure. What happens to the guy we're supporting? He trashes the plan by a precipitous action. Maliki undermines the plan which Petraeus had laid out, and we just simply continue to defend Maliki.

General KEANE. So, you don't want to give him any credit.

Chairman LEVIN. Maliki, for what?

General KEANE. We've been beating this guy up for 2 years, saying, "This thing is not just about Sunnis and al Qaeda, this is really about Shiite extremists."

Chairman LEVIN. Let's go through the credits——

General KEANE. So, he steps up to the plate and starts to do something about it. Yes, it's a little ill-conceived, and it wasn't properly planned. In the long run, let's focus on how it ends and not how it began.

Chairman LEVIN. I agree with that. But, when you say "give him a little credit," I don't give him credit for precipitously going to the plate and swinging wildly. No, I don't. Because it raises a question as to what his motive is and whether or not there's a political motive in his mind, in terms of the power struggle he is in, politically, perhaps, with the Sadrists. So, it raises a big question as to his motivation. The wisdom of putting all of the eggs in the basket of someone who clearly is not someone who is nonsectarian, who has his own political ax to grind. So, that is where I have a lot of problems.

General KEANE. Well, I'm going to be the last to say that he's not——

Chairman LEVIN. It's not a matter of whether or not we want to succeed. This isn't a question of whether or not you want to succeed in Iraq. The question is whether or not the Maliki course of action, which we are totally locked at the hip on, is the right way to go. That's the specific question. Or whether not we should end this open-ended commitment and let Maliki and others know, "Folks, we've been there 5 years, we're spending $12 billion a month, we've lost 4,000-plus troops, this is longer than World War II, we've given you an opportunity." Now we're saying, objectively, the first 3 years were wasted, now we're saying that? There were some of us that were saying that was the wrong course, 3 years ago. But, we were then told, "You're defeatists. You want to surrender." That's what we heard, 4 years ago, 3 years ago, 2 years ago. No, we don't. We want to succeed as much as anybody else. The question is: Does this course that we're on lead to a conclusion which is a good conclusion, or does this lead to greater and greater intercommunal conflict? That's the issue.

It's an issue where we have different points of view, and yesterday, by the way, when General Petraeus was asked, "Could reasonable people differ on this issue?" he would not even concede that reasonable people could reach a different conclusion than he did, I have to tell you, I was struck by that. I was so sure that General Petraeus would say, "Of course reasonable people can differ." All three of you are reasonable people, sitting at this table, and you differ with each other. Does that mean you're not reasonable people? You're all reasonable people. You have very strong opinions that differ with each other. But, not to concede that somebody who differs with his approach, which is just a continuation of an open-ended commitment that those people are reasonable, it seems to me, showed the lack of a balance on his part to see the other side of this issue and to at least acknowledge the possibility, even though he disagrees with it, that the best course of action here may be to force the Iraqis to use the only leverage we have, which is our presence and the departure of most of our troops as a way of forcing them to accept a consensus position, "There is no military solution, there is only a political solution."

Now, I've talked long enough, and I haven't taken time for my colleagues, but I want to give all of you a chance to sum up. Why don't we go in the same order

Dr. Bacevich?

Dr. BACEVICH. I guess I would sum up just with two points. It's a great honor for me just to come and be part of this event. My

frustration stems from the fact that the subject is Iraq, and the subject ends up being narrowly Iraq, and therefore, the conversation tends not to get around to the larger strategic questions.

I'll repeat a point I made earlier, that, in my judgment at least, the continuation of this war serves to preclude a discussion over what ought to be our response to violent Islamic radicalism, given the failure of the Bush strategy, given the failure of the freedom agenda, and the failure of the doctrine of preventive war. General Keane himself acknowledged, earlier on, we don't have a strategy. As important as this war is, and trying to find a way to get out of it, it is the absence of a strategy, and really an absence of a clear understanding of how great or how limited the threat posed by violent Islamic radicalism that simply has been lost.

I guess I would recommend to you, Senator, that some part of the conversation, at some point, should get to these larger strategic issues.

But, thank you very much.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Dr. Bacevich.

General Keane?

General KEANE. Thank you. Just briefly.

I share your frustration and the frustration of other members of the committee, in terms of the time of our involvement here and the thought that what really goes on is, we're just kicking the can down the road some more. But, the fact of the matter is, there really is a new strategy at play, it has worked to resolve a lot of the major conflict in the central region. We will finish al Qaeda this year. I'm also convinced we're going to bring stability in the south. It's not as tough a problem as what we dealt with in the central region.

Maliki now, for the first time ever, has the backing of all the political parties behind him in what he's doing in the south, except for the Sadrist Party. That is something, in and of itself.

Let's be honest, our government browbeat Maliki into the national legislative agenda. Then, last time General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker were here, we were beating up on them because they didn't do any of it. Now they've done 12 of 18, and 4 of the 6 significant legislative ones that will have dramatic impact on the people. Now we're beating them up to say it hasn't been implemented.

To get to where they were took months of compromise and negotiations, and you know far better than me, in terms of getting complicated major sovereign-state issues like that passed, and they did. That deserves some recognition and some credit. If executed, and I believe it will be, it will change Iraq, as will the provincial elections, as will amnesty and the de-Ba'athification laws.

Yes, I am optimistic. This is not an open-ended contract, Senator. It is not. I mean, our policy is to transition to the ISFs.

Chairman LEVIN. That's been true for years.

General KEANE. Your frustration is that for 3 years we had the wrong policy. That's true. We have the right policy now, and we will transition to the ISFs. But, you're not going to get General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker in here and lay out a time schedule on when that's going to be. They have too many variables to cope with. But, at the same time, I can provide you a framework

for that, because I'm not accountable, the way they are, and I'm convinced it's pretty close. We will transition, and I think if you put the two schedules out on a piece of paper, I'm not sure they're all that different, except for the crowd that wants a precipitous immediate withdrawal.

Chairman LEVIN. Okay, thank you, General Keane.

Dr. Malley?

Dr. MALLEY. Senator, I would start where you left off, which is that this is not a military struggle in which there are parties to be defeated and parties that are going to win. This is a political struggle in which deals are going to have to be made, for the most part, putting al Qaeda aside. That's what this is about. That's where we have to decide whether our mission makes sense or not.

My fear, as I said earlier, is that we may have wise tactics, but we don't have a strategy. We don't have a strategy to achieve achievable goals. The real onus has to be on the Maliki Government, on the Iraqi Government.

This military mission has a point and has a purpose only if it is set in the context of a strategy, achievable goals, where we put the onus on the Iraqi Government to do what it needs to do, and where we have a regional strategy, so that whenever we leave, we do it in an environment that is less polarized and less tense. But again, to echo what you said, I think we've done more than our part. Now it's up to them.

Chairman LEVIN. Gentlemen, you've been great. This kind of discussion is exactly what I know our colleagues relish and welcome, regardless of their own predilections, which the American people, I think, are really into, in terms of a debate on Iraq policy again, and that's healthy.

We will stand adjourned, with our gratitude.

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR SUSAN COLLINS

DRAWDOWN OF TROOPS

1. Senator COLLINS. Dr. Bacevich, General Keane, and Dr. Malley, will a pause in the drawdown after July ease the pressure on the Iraqis to make progress in meeting these important political and economic benchmarks?

Dr. BACEVICH. The question assumes that actions on our part—whether sending more troops to Iraq or pulling some of them out—can fundamentally affect the behavior of the Iraqi Government. I'm not sure that I buy that assumption. It's far more likely that Iraqi politics have a dynamic that derives from domestic Iraqi considerations related to ethnic, tribal, and sectarian identity. In short, whatever the trajectory of Iraqi politics, whether toward democracy or authoritarianism or chaos, they will decide and we will find ourselves cast largely in the role of spectators.

General Keane did not respond in time for printing. When received, answer will be retained in committee files.

Dr. Malley did not respond in time for printing. When received, answer will be retained in committee files.

IRAQI SECURITY FORCES

2. Senator COLLINS. General Keane, one of the most important benchmarks is the need to increase the number of Iraqi security force (ISF) units capable of operating independently. The news reports that 1,000 Iraqis either refused to fight or simply abandoned their posts during the Basra offensive are troubling to me and indicate that despite the time and funding we have put into training and equipping the Iraqi troops, we are not seeing the results we hoped for. Furthermore, both United States

and Iraqi commanders stated in January that the ISF would not be ready to secure Iraq from internal threats until 2012, and from external threats until 2018–2020.

It strikes me that the problem may not be one of resources and training, but of motivation—in other words, that Iraqis may be less willing to take responsibility for their own security because they know U.S. forces are there indefinitely to back them up.

Why, in your opinion, has the ISF performed so unevenly?

General Keane did not respond in time for printing. When received, answer will be retained in committee files.

3. Senator COLLINS. General Keane, we heard General Petraeus testify yesterday that the security situation in Iraq has improved since the implementation of the surge and that the number of combat battalions capable of taking the lead in operations has grown to well over 100.

The report issued by the Independent Commission on the ISF, chaired by retired Marine Corps General and former Commandant of the Marine Corps, James Jones, suggests that coalition forces could begin to be adjusted, realigned, and re-tasked as the ISF becomes more and more capable. General Jones' report stated that U.S. forces could soon be retasked to better ensure territorial defense of the state by concentrating on the eastern and western borders and the active defense of critical infrastructures essential to Iraq.

This is very similar in many ways to the transition of mission proposed by the Iraq Study Group, and also proposed in legislation by Senator Ben Nelson and me. We have suggested that our troops transition their mission and focus on border security, counterterrorism operations, training and equipment of Iraqi troops, and protecting Americans and American infrastructure.

Under what conditions should the U.S. military begin a realignment of the mission in Iraq?

General Keane did not respond in time for printing. When received, answer will be retained in committee files.

[Whereupon, at 12:27 p.m., the committee adjourned.]

THE SITUATION IN IRAQ, PROGRESS MADE BY THE GOVERNMENT IN IRAQ IN MEETING BENCHMARKS AND ACHIEVING RECONCILIATION, THE FUTURE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN IRAQ, AND THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 2008

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:02 p.m. in room SH–216, Hart Senate Office Building, Senator Carl Levin (chairman) presiding.

Committee members present: Senators Levin, Kennedy, Lieberman, Reed, Akaka, Bill Nelson, E. Benjamin Nelson, Bayh, Pryor, Webb, Warner, Sessions, Collins, Graham, Cornyn, Thune, and Wicker.

Committee staff members present: Richard D. DeBobes, staff director; and Leah C. Brewer, nominations and hearings clerk.

Majority staff members present: Daniel J. Cox, Jr., professional staff member; William G.P. Monahan, counsel; Michael J. Noblet, professional staff member; and William K. Sutey, professional staff member.

Minority staff members present: Michael V. Kostiw, Republican staff director; William M. Caniano, professional staff member; Paul C. Hutton IV, professional staff member; Gregory T. Kiley, professional staff member; David M. Morriss, minority counsel; Lucian L. Niemeyer, professional staff member; Lynn F. Rusten, professional staff member; and Dana W. White, professional staff member.

Staff assistants present: Fletcher L. Cork, Kevin A. Cronin, and Jessica L. Kingston.

Committee members' assistants present: Sharon L. Waxman and Jay Maroney, assistants to Senator Kennedy; James Tuite, assistant to Senator Byrd; Elizabeth King, assistant to Senator Reed; Bonni Berge, assistant to Senator Akaka; Christopher Caple, assistant to Senator Bill Nelson; Andrew R. Vanlandingham, assistant to Senator Ben Nelson; Jon Davey, assistant to Senator Bayh; Andrew Shapiro, assistant to Senator Clinton; M. Bradford Foley, assistant to Senator Pryor; Gordon I. Peterson, assistant to Senator Webb; Sandra Luff, assistant to Senator Warner; Anthony J. Lazarski, assistant to Senator Inhofe; Todd Stiefler, assistant to Senator Sessions; Jane Alonso and Mark J. Winter, assistants to

Senator Collins; Clyde A. Taylor IV, assistant to Senator Chambliss; Lindsey Neas, assistant to Senator Dole; David Hanke and Russell J. Thomasson, assistants to Senator Cornyn; Jason Van Beek, assistant to Senator Thune; and Erskine W. Wells III, assistant to Senator Wicker.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CARL LEVIN, CHAIRMAN

Chairman LEVIN. Good afternoon, everybody.

On behalf of the committee, let me welcome you, Secretary Gates and Admiral Mullen. We appreciate your willingness to appear before the committee this afternoon. We thank you for a lifetime of service to this country.

The issue before us isn't whether or not we want to succeed in leaving Iraq stable and secure. We all seek that goal. The question is how to maximize the chances of success and whether the course that we're on is the right one.

Since the beginning of this conflict, we've tried repeatedly to get this administration to change course and to put responsibility on the Iraqi leaders for their own future, since just about everybody agrees there is no military solution, and only a political settlement among the Iraqis can end the conflict. The administration has repeatedly missed opportunities to shift that burden to the Iraqis.

In September—excuse me, in January 2007, President Bush said, in announcing the surge, that, "The Iraqi Government plans to take responsibility for security in all of Iraq's provinces by November 2007." Clearly, the Iraqis have not taken the lead on security in "all of Iraq's provinces." As a matter of fact, as of March 2008, the Iraqi Government had not assumed security responsibility for the most populous provinces. As the fighting in Basrah demonstrated, the Iraqi security hold in provinces for which it is responsible is tenuous at best.

In February of this year, Secretary Gates said that there was within the Department, "a broad agreement that the drawdown should continue," as the added presurge brigades left. Secretary Gates, in his written statement to the committee this afternoon, refers to a period of consolidation and evaluation as a "brief pause." Now, that stands in contrast to what General Petraeus said to this committee 2 days ago. Under questioning, General Petraeus pointedly refused to use either the word "brief" or "pause" to describe how long reductions might be suspended under the approach that he was recommending to the President.

General Petraeus's recommendation was that there be a "45-day period of consolidation and evaluation," beginning in July, which would then be followed by a "process of assessment, which would determine, over time"—those are his words—when he can make recommendations for further reductions.

In September, in other words, according to General Petraeus's recommendation, a period of assessment would just begin. General Petraeus repeatedly refused to estimate how long that assessment period would last or how low U.S. troop levels in Iraq might be by the end of the year, even if all goes well, which was the question put to him.

What recommendation did President Bush adopt a few hours ago? General Petraeus's open-ended approach or Secretary Gates's

brief pause? The answer is, since the President said that General Petraeus "will have all the time he needs," and even went so far as to say that "some have suggested that this period of evaluation will be a pause" and that is misleading, to use the President's words.

In summary, instead of a continuous reduction beyond presurge levels, or even a brief pause, what the President did today was to reinforce America's open-ended commitment in Iraq by suspending troop reductions in July for an unlimited period of time.

The administration's current policies are perpetuating Iraq's dependency on the United States—politically, economically, and militarily; and they take the pressure off the Iraqis to reach a political solution. The administration has repeatedly expressed its unconditional support for the excessively sectarian government of Prime Minister Maliki. Key legislation for reconciliation, including a hydrocarbon law, elections law, and amendments to the constitution, have not been passed. The success of other laws will depend upon their implementation.

Our continuing funding of Iraq's reconstruction makes utterly no sense, particularly in light of Iraq's cash surplus resulting from the export of 2 million barrels of oil a day. Prior to the start of the Iraq war, the administration told Congress that Iraq would be able to finance its own reconstruction through oil revenues, and that they would be able to do that in fairly short order.

Five years later, U.S. taxpayers have paid at least $27 billion for reconstruction activities, while Iraq has reaped the benefits of skyrocketing oil prices. Iraq now has tens of billions of dollars in surplus funds in their banks in accounts around the world, including about $30 billion in U.S. banks.

Furthermore, according to the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, the Iraqi Government budgeted $6.2 billion for its capital budget in 2006, but spent less than a quarter of that. The President said today that "Iraqis, in their recent budget, would outspend us on reconstruction by more than 10 to 1." However, as of August 31, 2007, according to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the Iraqi Government has, in fact, spent only a fraction of its $10.1-billion capital budget for 2007.

Senator Warner and I wrote to the GAO on March 6, asking the Comptroller General to look into why the Iraqi Government is not spending more of its oil revenue on reconstruction, economic development, and providing essential services for its own people.

Ambassador Crocker told this committee, on Tuesday, that "The era of U.S.-funded major infrastructure projects is over," and the U.S. is no longer "involved in the physical reconstruction business."

However, as of last Thursday, the U.S. Government is paying the salaries of almost 100,000 Iraqis who are working on reconstruction. Listen to this, at the same time that Ambassador Crocker was saying what he said, that the U.S. is no longer involved in the physical reconstruction business, and the President today adding that "American funding for large-scale reconstruction projects is approaching zero," just this week the committee received a notice from the Department of Defense (DOD) that it intends to increase U.S. funding for reconstruction for this year by over 50 percent by reallocating $590 million of Iraqi security force funds previously

designated for training and equipping and sustaining of the Iraqi security forces. The notice that we received from the DOD, from the comptroller there, is that the increased funding would be used, for example, to build 55 new Iraqi police stations.

I sent a letter to Secretary Gates earlier today, and we notified his comptroller yesterday, requesting that the DOD's notice to us of its plan to use these additional U.S. taxpayer monies to pay for Iraqi reconstruction be withdrawn.

[The information referred to follows:]

CARL LEVIN, MICHIGAN, CHAIRMAN

EDWARD M. KENNEDY, MASSACHUSETTS
ROBERT C. BYRD, WEST VIRGINIA
JOSEPH I. LIEBERMAN, CONNECTICUT
JACK REED, RHODE ISLAND
DANIEL K. AKAKA, HAWAII
BILL NELSON, FLORIDA
E. BENJAMIN NELSON, NEBRASKA
EVAN BAYH, INDIANA
HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON, NEW YORK
MARK L. PRYOR, ARKANSAS
JIM WEBB, VIRGINIA
CLAIRE McCASKILL, MISSOURI

JOHN McCAIN, ARIZONA
JOHN WARNER, VIRGINIA
JAMES M. INHOFE, OKLAHOMA
JEFF SESSIONS, ALABAMA
SUSAN M. COLLINS, MAINE
SAXBY CHAMBLISS, GEORGIA
LINDSEY O. GRAHAM, SOUTH CAROLINA
ELIZABETH DOLE, NORTH CAROLINA
JOHN CORNYN, TEXAS
JOHN THUNE, SOUTH DAKOTA
MEL MARTINEZ, FLORIDA
ROGER F. WICKER, MISSISSIPPI

RICHARD D. DEBOBES, STAFF DIRECTOR
MICHAEL VINCENT KOSTIW, REPUBLICAN STAFF DIRECTOR

United States Senate
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
WASHINGTON, DC 20510–6050

April 10, 2008

Honorable Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon, Room 3E718
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am in receipt of the Department's notification of intent to reallocate $590 million for construction and infrastructure improvements for the Iraq Security Forces. The previous plan was to spend those funds on training, equipping and sustainment activities under the Iraq Security Forces Fund.

At the beginning of the Iraq war, Congress was told by Deputy Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz that Iraq would be able to "finance its own reconstruction" through oil revenues in fairly short order. To date, the U.S. taxpayers have paid at least $27 billion for reconstruction activities while Iraq has accumulated significant windfall profits from the high price of oil (now more than $110 a barrel) and U.S. taxpayers are paying between $3 and $4 for a gallon of gasoline. From all reports, Iraq now has tens of billions of dollars in surplus funds in their banks and in accounts around the world. Furthermore, according to the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, the Iraqi Government budgeted $6.2 billion for its capital budget in 2006 but spent only 23 percent of it. As of August 31, 2007, the Iraqi Government had spent somewhere between 4.4 percent (according to the Government Accountability Office) and 24 percent (according to the White House) of its $10.1 billion capital budget for 2007.

Your reallocation notice starkly contrasts with Ambassador Crocker's testimony before the Committee on April 8, 2008, when he stated "the era of U.S.-funded major infrastructure projects is over" and the U.S. is no longer "involved in the physical reconstruction business."

In light of the extraordinary sacrifice of the U.S. taxpayers to date and the ability of the Iraqi Government to fund construction and infrastructure projects itself, it is completely inappropriate to continue to use U.S. taxpayer funds for such purposes. I request that the Department not proceed with this reallocation.

Sincerely,

Carl Levin
Chairman

Chairman LEVIN. Supporters and critics of the Iraq war may disagree over much of the administration's policy, but can't we at least agree that a country which is awash in cash as the price of oil tops $110 a barrel, that Iraq should be using the resources that they have to pay for their own reconstruction?

Again, I welcome our witnesses. I thank them for coming here. I know just how difficult their schedule is, and our schedule may be comparable to theirs today, since, as of a few minutes ago, we had a number of votes scheduled that are going to be stacked to begin in a few minutes, and I think that we've requested that that be changed, that they be delayed until later in the afternoon. But, as of now, there is no change.

Senator Warner.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN WARNER

Senator WARNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I join you and other members of the committee in giving you a warm welcome and thanks to both of you.

I've had quite a few years experience. It's been an honor to work with the Secretaries of Defense and the Chairmen. I think history will record the two of you one of the finest teams that ever served the country.

Secretary Gates, I don't see your arm in a sling. You're back in every way. You're going to swing at us a little bit, I hope. Don't feel deterred.

I also want to thank the service men and women under your command, and their families, particularly those families who have lost loved ones and those families who are loyally trying to nurse back to health the wounded. This country owes them a great debt of gratitude.

This week, we had testimony by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker. I thought it was well prepared. The hearings explored, I believe, all facets, whether or not the answers meet the requirements of, individual or collectively, remains to be seen, but they came forward and did a real strong effort in that vein.

We had witnesses yesterday before this committee with some different perspectives on the situation in Iraq.

I want to commend you, Mr. Chairman, for having a full hearing schedule on this very important subject.

Lastly—that's Iraq and Afghanistan—lastly, Mr. Secretary, I wrote a letter to the President, with a copy to you—and I'll ask unanimous consent that that letter be placed in the record following my opening remarks——

Chairman LEVIN. It will be.

Senator WARNER.—expressing my grave concern about the narcotrafficking in Afghanistan. It has increased every year. Today, it's so full of drugs getting out of that country, it's meeting, as I understand it, almost 90 percent of the marketplace. Now, I know you've tried hard, Mr. Secretary, but the letter asked this matter be raised to the top levels of the the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) conference, because I think it deserves no less. I find it unconscionable that narcotics trafficking, which money is taken out of as it proceeds to leave Afghanistan and—goes directly into

the hands of the Taliban, the insurgents, to buy weapons, which are used against NATO forces, our independent forces, and other allies struggling to achieve the goals in Afghanistan of enabling that country to exercise the reins of sovereignty over their people and their land.

I would hope today that you could tell us what NATO did about that. I understand, from your able staff, that there was strong consideration, and I think I and my colleagues are very anxious to get those reports.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll ask to put in a statement by Senator McCain and a further statement of my own.

But, let's get to the hearing. We're anxious to hear from our witnesses.

Chairman LEVIN. The statement you referred to, of Senator McCain, will be made part of the record, as will your letter, as well as my letter to Secretary Gates, requesting the withdrawal of this shift of $600 million for additional reconstruction projects in Iraq. They'll all be made part of the record.

[The prepared statements of Senator McCain and Senator Warner follow:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN

Mr. Chairman, I join you in welcoming Secretary Gates and Admiral Mullen to the committee. These are challenging times in our Nation's history and Mr. Chairman, I cannot think of two better men to serve our country and lead our brave men and women in uniform. I am grateful for your service and I thank you for testifying before us today on U.S. strategy and policy in Iraq and Afghanistan.

On Tuesday, we heard from Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus on progress in Iraq and their thoughts on our way forward. We still face difficulties in Iraq and Afghanistan, but we are making progress in both Iraq and Afghanistan. While there has been recent fighting in Baghdad and Basra, violence overall is down in Iraq. NATO's recent decision to add troops to Afghanistan is a welcomed and positive development for our ongoing fight against al Qaeda and a resurgent Taliban. The security, political, and economic gains outlined this week by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker are real.

Today, the President addressed the Nation about his way ahead in Iraq, and today, we have two men, the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who are supremely aware of the challenges our forces and our policymakers face this year. Congress has a choice—as it did last year—to choose to build on the progress we have made or set a timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq resulting in ultimate defeat.

Last year, many observers predicted that the surge would fail. Yet, sectarian and ethnic violence, civilian deaths, and deaths of coalition forces have all fallen dramatically since the middle of last year. This improved security environment presents an opportunity for an average Iraqi, in the future, to embrace a more normal political and economic life. Reconciliation is happening. Over the weekend, Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish leaders backed the Prime Minister in a statement supporting his operation in Basra and disbanding all the militias. No doubt, much more needs to be done and Iraq's leaders need to know that we expect them to demonstrate the necessary leadership to rebuild their country. But today, it is possible to talk with real hope and optimism about the future of Iraq and the results of our efforts there.

Iraq and Afghanistan lie at the heart of the region. A success in Iraq and Afghanistan means both nations are stable, prosperous, democratic states that do not threaten their neighbors and assist in combating terrorists and religious tolerance must triumph over violent radicalism.

Whether Iraq or Afghanistan become stable democracies, or sink back into chaos and extremism, the outcome will have long-term implications for this critical part of the world as well as our Nation.

This is broad strategic perspective on our efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Many people ask how do we succeed in Iraq and Afghanistan? The critics said we couldn't meet our goals in Iraq—that they were unachievable. They were wrong a year ago and they are wrong now. Since June 2007, sectarian and ethnic violence in Iraq has

been reduced by 90 percent. Overall civilian deaths have been reduced by more than 70 percent. Deaths of coalition forces have fallen by 70 percent. People are going back to work. Markets are open. Oil revenues are climbing. Inflation is down. Iraq's economy is expected to grow by roughly 7 percent in 2008. Political reconciliation is occurring across Iraq at the local and provincial grassroots level. Admittedly, political progress at the national level has been too slow, but there is progress.

I know that the witnesses this morning face formidable challenges and what often seems like insurmountable obstacles, but I am confident that they will discuss ways in which America can succeed in Iraq and detail the likely costs of our failure to Iraq and the region. If the United States chooses to withdraw from Iraq before adequate security is established, we will exchange for victory a defeat that will have long lasting and terrible consequences for ourselves, our friends and the region. If Iraq or Afghanistan becomes a failed state, they could become a haven for terrorists to train and plan their operations. In Afghanistan, it would be a case of history repeating itself—a chance no one is willing to take. Iran's influence would increase in Iraq and would encourage other countries to seek accommodation with Tehran at the expense of our national interests.

However, if we and the Iraqis can build on our successes, we have a chance to make Iraq a force for stability and freedom, not conflict and chaos, in doing so, our troops can leave with pride and our Nation can leave behind countries that contribute to the security of America and the world. I know that our distinguished witnesses possess a lifetime of experience and insight, and I look forward to their testimony.

PREPARED STATEMENT BY SENATOR JOHN WARNER

Mr. Chairman, I join in welcoming Secretary Gates and Admiral Mullen back before this committee. I commend the continued skilled manner in which both have carried out their duties and responsibilities during these challenging times.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for scheduling the series of hearings this week. On Tuesday we received the report from Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus. Yesterday, we had a very good discussion with witnesses from outside government on their evaluation of the situation in Iraq and policy alternatives for the way forward.

The committee, I believe, is pleased with the decision announced today by President Bush that he will reduce Army combat tours in Iraq from 15 months to 12 months. I presume our witnesses opinions on this issue were taken into consideration before the President made his final decision.

The hearings held this week, coupled with the President's announcement, will yield an equally intensive line of questioning. The remaining issue, that of dwell time, or the time a servicemember will return from deployment and remain at his or her home station, must also be addressed.

Speaking for myself, I have further lines of inquiry that I have formulated from these recent events.

First, the military surge largely produced the intended results as announced by the President in his address on January 10, 2007 and provided the Iraq Government, "the breathing space it needs to make progress."

The second part of the surge was the expectation that the Iraqi Government would make progress on national reconciliation. I acknowledge that some progress has been made. However, regrettably, the Maliki Government appears largely unable, or not inclined, to achieve national reconciliation based upon top-down political accommodation. From a long-term perspective, the prospect of establishing a secure and stable Iraq that rests upon a patchwork of local arrangements is not heartening.

Additionally, the American people, every day, mourn the loss of life and limb and the hardship imposed on the military families. I believe many Americans are also growing increasingly impatient with Iraq's sectarian squabbling; Iraq's dilatory political delays; and impatient with the vast sums of U.S. funds that are being spent on Iraq's reconstruction at a time when Iraq's oil revenues and their surplus funds in banks continues to grow.

I look forward to hearing the evaluation of the witnesses and the reasonable effort of reconciliation that will take place in the coming months.

Finally, there is increasing attention towards the negotiations between the United States and Iraq on a Strategic Framework Agreement which would include a Status of Forces Agreement. With regards to these negotiations, I urge the witnesses to advocate for the fullest consultation between the administration and Congress.

Turning to Afghanistan, I am increasingly concerned that our goals there, and the gains achieved so far, have been placed in jeopardy by the continuing growth of the drug trade in Afghanistan. The profits from that trade are being used to purchase arms for the Taliban and other insurgent groups which are, in turn, being used against U.S., NATO, and other partnered forces. I, myself, find this unconscionable and believe it has to be addressed immediately at the highest levels.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to place into the record a letter I sent to the President, prior to the NATO summit, to address this issue at the highest levels. I look forward to hearing what steps, at the NATO summit, were taken to address this critical problem.

[The information for the record follows after the prepared statement of Senator Warner.]

It has been 9 weeks since our witnesses last appeared before the committee. Since then, the following events have occurred: the NATO Summit in Bucharest; the resignation of Admiral Fallon; the elections in Pakistan; and continued accounts of disturbing Iranian activity—all of which have bearing on our discussions today on Iraq and Afghanistan.

During these 9 weeks, the committee also conducted a number of hearings which addressed the readiness of our Armed Forces.

Six years of war have placed strain on the Armed Forces. In these hearings, the most disquieting statement—for me—came from General Cody, Vice Chief of Staff of the Army. At a Readiness and Management Support Subcommittee hearing on April 1, General Cody provided the following testimony: "Lengthy and repeated deployments with insufficient recovery time at home station have placed incredible stress on our soldiers and on their families, testing the resolve of the All-Volunteer Force like never before."

As we approach the 35th anniversary of the establishment of the All-Volunteer Force, we must be ever mindful that the All-Volunteer Force is a national treasure we must preserve.

Our witnesses should expect to address these concerns with the committee.

Before closing, I would like to acknowledge a very significant event earlier this week. It was the presentation of the Medal of Honor to the parents of Petty Officer Michael Anthony Monsoor, a Navy SEAL. In September 2006, Petty Officer Monsoor laid down his life in Iraq for his fellow team members. America owes him and his family a debt that can never be repaid.

This is why, everyday, Americans honor the service and sacrifice of all those who have given life and limb in Iraq and Afghanistan—as well as the sacrifices of their families.

Chairman Levin, thank you.

JOHN WARNER
VIRGINIA

COMMITTEES:
ARMED SERVICES
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

United States Senate

March 31, 2008

225 RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4601
(202) 224-2023
http://warner.senate.gov

CONSTITUENT SERVICE OFFICES:

4900 WORLD TRADE CENTER
101 WEST MAIN STREET
NORFOLK, VA 23510-1680
(757) 441-3079

5309 COMMONWEALTH CENTRE
PARKWAY
MIDLOTHIAN, VA 23112
(804) 739-0247

235 FEDERAL BUILDING
P.O. BOX 867
ABINGDON, VA 24212-0867
(276) 628-8158

1003 FIRST UNION BANK BUILDING
213 SOUTH JEFFERSON STREET
ROANOKE, VA 24011-1714
(540) 857-2676

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Success in Afghanistan remains a critical national security requirement for not only the United States, but the international community.

In your meeting with President Karzai on September 26,2007, you said:

"It's in our security interests that this democracy flourish because if freedom takes place in Afghanistan, it will set an example of what's possible in other parts of the broader Middle East. When people see that there's hope in a part of the world that had been ravaged by war, had been terrorized by brutal extremists; when people realize there's a different way of life, they'll demand the same thing."

I support strongly your statement and have consistently through the years voiced support of these goals in Congress. This letter is written to express my concerns that these goals, the gains achieved so far, could be placed in jeopardy by the continuing growth in the drug trade in Afghanistan. The profits from that trade are being used to purchase arms for the Taliban and other insurgent groups in which are used against U.S., NATO, and other partnered forces. This is unconscionable.

Permitting the Taliban to restore its authority in Afghanistan, or allowing Afghanistan to become a failed state, would be letting down the freedom-loving people of Afghanistan, providing a major victory for al-Qaeda, and damaging severely the credibility of NATO.

Today, there is no doubt that progress has been made in Afghanistan since 2001. U.S. efforts, together with the service of twenty-five NATO allies and fifteen partner countries have assisted the Afghan people in securing their freedoms and rebuilding their nation.

However, there is growing concern about the Taliban's resurgence; the presence of cross-border sanctuaries in Pakistan; the commitment of our NATO allies to what is likely be a longer military presence in Afghanistan; and the capacity of the Afghan government to achieve self governance.

The greatest concern is the escalating opium economy.

According to the Department of State, narcotics production in Afghanistan has steadily increased, year after year, to a historic high in 2007. Reports from the United Nations, released in August 2007, found that the areas in Afghanistan, under opium cultivation produced 93 percent of the world's opium poppy.

According to the United Nations, the area in Afghanistan under opium cultivation is now larger than the combined total area under coca cultivation in Latin America.

The President
March 31, 2008
Page 2

I have had the privilege to consult with a number of our military and intelligence officials, and members of the U.S. and NATO diplomatic corps, in recent months and they have confirmed my grave concern about the worsening drug problem.

The fact is that the revenues from this drug problem are filtering their way back into the hands of the Taliban, and other insurgent and criminal groups. This drug money enables the enemy to have greater purchasing power for weapons and other pieces of equipment to engage not only NATO forces, but our forces within NATO and our forces that are not part of NATO.

I believe that it is incumbent upon the United States to elevate this issue to the Heads of Government and States at the forthcoming NATO conference.

As a part of a new strategy there must be a specific designation of accountability. Americans are well aware of the sign "The Buck Stops Here" that was always on President Truman's desk in The Oval Office.

I recently discussed with General Craddock, the NATO Supreme Allied Commander, where he believed the "Buck Stops." He confirmed in writing that he was "unsure." A copy of that correspondence is attached. I have, as does the Congress, a very high regard for his professional views.

Further, I had recent opportunities to speak with retired General Jim Jones, the former NATO commander. He, along with Ambassador Thomas Pickering, was the co-chair of the Afghanistan Study Group. This group of distinguished experts on the region and on foreign policy published a report in January 2008 which recognized the deepening crisis in Afghanistan and the linkage between narco-economy and the insurgency. Earlier this week, I asked General Jones the same question I asked General Craddock. General Jones concurred, saying that he, too, was unsure where the "Buck Stops."

I respectfully submit these thoughts for your consideration. We have an obligation to those in uniform, bravely under enemy fire in Afghanistan, and the families of these servicemen and women.

With kind regards, I am

Very Respectfully,

John Warner

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
The Honorable Robert M. Gates
The Honorable Stephen J. Hadley

COMMANDER
UNITED STATES EUROPEAN COMMAND

March 19, 2008

Dear Senator Warner:

It was a pleasure to visit with you on 12 March 2008 and discuss important issues concerning EUCOM and NATO, as they pertain to our National Security interests.

During our meeting, you asked me, "With regard to counternarcotics, where does the buck stop?" At that time, my response was that I wasn't sure. In the past, I have asked several people representing both U.S. and other national and international interests that question. I received either no or differing answers. So, given that fact and more introspection, I find no change to my original response--I remain unsure!

As always, your support in issues affecting our National Security interests is greatly appreciated.

Very Respectfully,

BANTZ J. CRADDOCK
General, U.S. Army

The Honorable John W. Warner, Jr.
225 Senate Russell Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Chairman LEVIN. Secretary Gates?

STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT M. GATES, SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Secretary GATES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Senator Warner.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to be here to discuss the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. As always, I thank the members of the committee for your support of the DOD, but, more importantly, for your support of our men and women in uniform. While there have been, and will continue to be, debates over our strategy in these campaigns, I know we are all unified in our admiration for those who have volunteered to serve.

As you have heard from Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus, violence in Iraq has declined dramatically since this time last year. In addition to the drop in U.S. casualties, we have seen a dramatic and encouraging decline in the loss of Iraqi civilians. Ethnosectarian deaths are down approximately 90 percent; and overall civilian deaths, 70 percent.

At the same time, the Iraqi security forces have provided a surge of their own to complement U.S. and coalition efforts. Though the recent operations in Basrah revealed shortcomings of Iraq's security forces, it is important to remember that, a year ago, they would not have been capable of launching a mission of that scale.

At this time, half of Iraq's provinces have attained provincial Iraqi control. The next province we anticipate moving into that category is Anbar, a remarkable development, considering the grim situation—security situation in that province, 18 months ago. The Iraqi forces will shoulder more of the burden as we reduce our forces over time.

On the economic front, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) expects real gross domestic product growth in Iraq to exceed 7 percent this year. Oil exports are above prewar levels and generated almost $40 billion for Iraq in 2007. These numbers reflect improvements that are having a tangible impact on the lives of Iraqis. These economic gains also mean that Iraqis should shoulder ever-greater responsibility for economic reconstruction and equipping their forces.

In recent months, we have seen the Government of Iraq make meaningful progress in the legislative arena, as you heard from Ambassador Crocker. These legislative measures are not perfect, and certainly have their shortcomings. Clearly, these laws must be implemented in a spirit of reconciliation, or at least accommodation. Still, we ought not ignore or dismiss what has been achieved.

Just as there is real progress to report, there are also substantial reasons to be cautious. Al Qaeda in Iraq, though on the defensive, remains a lethal force. It is trying to regenerate itself, and will continue to launch gruesome terrorist attacks. There will be difficult days for Iraqis and coalition forces alike in coming months.

All of this, both the good and the bad, both progress and potential regression, was on our minds as we considered our options, going forward. In order to advise the President, I again asked for individual assessments and recommendations from the Commander in Iraq, from the Commander of Central Command (CENTCOM) and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The President received recommendations face-to-face with General Petraeus, Admiral Fallon, Admiral Mullen, and each of the Service Chiefs. Though all bring different perspectives, from the institutional military to the operational military, all concurred with General Petraeus's recommendations and the course the President has chosen in Iraq.

Presently, three of the five surge brigades have departed Iraq. The other two are scheduled to depart by the end of July. At this point, it is difficult to know what impact, if any, this reduction will have on the security situation. A brief pause for consolidation and evaluation following a return to presurge troop levels will allow us to analyze the process and its effects in a comprehensive way.

I do not anticipate this period of review to be an extended one, and I would emphasize that the hope, depending on conditions on the ground, is to reduce our presence further this fall.

But, we must be realistic. The security situation in Iraq remains fragile, and gains can be reversed. I believe our objectives are achievable. The gains that have been made over the past year, at

no small cost in blood and treasure, should not be allowed to unravel through precipitous actions.

Whatever you think of how we got to this place, the consequences of failure, of getting the endgame wrong, are enormous. Some have lamented what they believe was an unwillingness to listen to our military professionals at the beginning of the war. I hope that people will now not dismiss as irrelevant the unanimous views of the field commander, the CENTCOM commander, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. All of the Nation's most senior military officers endorse this step-by-step path forward. As I told the President, I also support these recommendations.

A final observation. I have 8 months left in this position. We continue to find ourselves divided over the path forward in Iraq. This is not a surprise. The truth is, perhaps excepting World War II, all of our country's wars have been divisive and controversial here at home. That is the glory of our democracy, and gives the lie to the notion we are a warlike people.

It was my hope, 16 months ago, that I could help forge a bipartisan path forward in our Iraq policy that would sustain a steadily lower, but still adequate and necessary, level of commitment for the years needed to yield an Iraq that is an ally against extremists and can govern and defend itself. I continue to harbor this hope for a bipartisan path, and I will continue to work for it.

But, I do fear that understandable frustration over years of war and dismay over the sacrifices already made may result in decisions that are gratifying in the short term, but very costly to our country and the American people in the long term.

We were attacked from Afghanistan in 2001, and we are at war in Afghanistan today, in no small measure because of mistakes this Government made, mistakes I, among others, made in the endgame of the Cold War there, some 20 years ago. If we get the endgame wrong in Iraq, I predict the consequences will be far worse.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Secretary Gates follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT M. GATES

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee: I appreciate the opportunity to be here to discuss the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. As always, I thank the members of the committee for your support of the Department of Defense, but, more importantly, your support of our men and women in uniform. While there have been—and will continue to be—debates over our strategy in these campaigns, I know we are all unified in our admiration for those who have volunteered to serve.

Let me begin with a few words about Afghanistan.

Last week, I attended the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) summit in Bucharest with the President and the Secretary of State. Progress was made in some key areas:

- First, NATO leaders unanimously reaffirmed the importance of success in Afghanistan and renewed their commitment to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission. This alone is a very significant event when one considers that domestic opposition in Europe has hardened as operational demands have greatly increased in the 17 months since NATO leaders met at Riga. Despite the challenges, NATO partners are standing together and standing firm;
- Underlining this point, a strategic vision document was adopted that lays out the alliance's goals over the next 3 to 5 years;
- A senior U.N. representative was appointed to coordinate development and reconstruction efforts; and

- Several allies pledged additional forces, most notably France, who will deploy a battalion to the volatile eastern part of the country.

These elements made Bucharest a successful summit with regard to Afghanistan and demonstrated that members of the alliance take their obligations seriously. Members of Congress have expressed frustration to me over NATO's shortcomings in the Afghanistan campaign—from force levels to caveats. I have had a few sharp things to say on these subjects myself. We continue to face serious challenges on the ground in Afghanistan.

But it is important to remember the substantial, indeed heroic, contributions of many allies—in particular those operating in the southern part of the country.

Before heading to Bucharest last week, I visited Denmark to meet with the Danish leadership and offer my thanks and appreciation for their efforts. Denmark—a country of about 5.5 million people and a total defense budget of $4 billion—is truly "punching above its weight" in Afghanistan. Their troops are in the fight and taking casualties—including two in the days that preceded my visit. I had a chance to meet privately with some Danish soldiers who had served in Helmand Province—a long-time Taliban stronghold. The soldiers told me that their efforts made a real difference by pushing back the enemy and by improving the lives of the local population. Senator Warner, I appreciated your kind words about Denmark last week.

We are grateful to Denmark and all of our allies—and in particular the British, the Canadians, the Australians, the Dutch, the Romanians, and the Estonians—who have stepped up over the past year to take on some of the most difficult and dangerous missions in Afghanistan. Their contributions are truly impressive.

Now to the main topic of this hearing—Iraq.

In the past 2 days, you have heard from Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus. Earlier today, the Nation heard from the President. I welcome the opportunity to contribute my views—as well as answer any questions you may have.

Last year, when the President announced an increase in troops, an overhaul of our strategy, and a new leadership team, many were skeptical whether these changes could fundamentally alter the situation in Iraq.

I believe the record shows that the fundamentals have changed, and that the United States is in a very different place in Iraq today—a better place, but one with significant challenges still ahead.

We have always said that there is no purely military solution to the many problems facing Iraq. But a basic level of security for the Iraqi people is a necessary precondition for progress to take place on other fronts. Since the full surge forces became operational last June—just 10 months ago—we have seen security gains accompanied by movement in the political, economic, and governance arenas, both at the local and national level.

As you heard from Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus, violence has declined dramatically since this time last year. In addition to the drop in U.S. casualties, we have seen a dramatic—and encouraging—decline in the loss of Iraqi civilians: ethno-sectarian deaths are down approximately 90 percent, and overall civilian deaths 70 percent.

At the same time, Iraqi security forces have provided a "surge" of their own to complement U.S. and coalition efforts. Though the recent operations in Basra revealed some shortcomings of Iraq's security forces, it is important to remember that a year ago they would not have been capable of launching a mission of that scale. At this time, half of Iraq's provinces have attained Provincial Iraqi Control. The next province we anticipate moving into that category is Anbar—a remarkable development considering the grim security situation in that province 18 months ago.

The Iraqi forces will shoulder more of the burden as we reduce our forces over time. I would reiterate that the United States has no desire to keep a large number of troops in Iraq indefinitely or have permanent bases. The Status of Forces Agreement being negotiated will put us on a path to a more "normal" security relationship with Iraq—one that more closely resembles the arrangements we have with other allies and partners.

On the economic front, the IMF expects real GDP growth in Iraq to exceed 7 percent this year. Oil exports are above pre-war levels and generated almost $40 billion for Iraq in 2007. These numbers reflect improvements that are having a tangible impact on the lives of Iraqis. To cite one example, the Narhwan Brick Factory Complex has quadrupled its workforce since January to 15,000. Similar efforts to revive industry are moving forward—aided by increasing foreign investment. These economic gains also mean that Iraqis should shoulder ever greater responsibility for reconstruction and equipping their forces.

In recent months, we have seen the Government of Iraq make meaningful progress in the legislative arena as well. Iraq's political leaders have passed:

- A pension law;
- An amnesty law;
- A provincial powers law;
- A justice and accountability law; and
- Their 2008 budget.

These legislative measures are not perfect and certainly have their shortfalls. Clearly these laws must be implemented in a spirit of reconciliation, or at least accommodation. Still, we ought not ignore or dismiss what has been achieved.

Just as there is real progress to report, there are also substantial reasons to be cautious. Al Qaeda in Iraq, though on the defensive, remains a lethal force. It is trying to regenerate itself and will continue to launch gruesome terrorist attacks. There will be difficult days for Iraqis and coalition forces alike in coming months.

Similarly, the presence of militias and criminal gangs remains troubling—as does the ongoing influence of Iran. The operation in Basra and its aftermath also raises a number of legitimate questions. Even so, there is still a great deal to be said for the Government of Iraq's decision to confront the problem.

All of this—both the good and the bad, both progress and potential regression—was on our minds as we considered our options going forward. In order to advise the President, I again asked for individual assessments and recommendations from the commander in Iraq, Central Command, and the Joint Chiefs. The President received recommendations from General Petraeus, Admiral Fallon, Admiral Mullen, and each of the Service Chiefs. Though all bring different perspectives—from the institutional military to the operational military—all concur with the course the President has chosen in Iraq.

Presently, two of the five surge brigades have left Iraq. The other three are scheduled to depart by July. At this point it is difficult to know what impact, if any, this reduction will have on the security situation. A brief pause for consolidation and evaluation following a return to pre-surge troop levels will allow us to analyze the process and its effects in a comprehensive way. I do not anticipate this period of review to be an extended one, and I would emphasize that the hope is conditions on the ground will allow us to reduce our presence further this fall. But we must be realistic. The security situation in Iraq remains fragile and gains can be reversed.

I believe the President's plan offers the best way to achieve our strategic goals:

- A unified, democratic and Federal Iraq that can govern, defend, and sustain itself;
- An Iraq that is an ally against jihadist terrorism and a net contributor to security in the Gulf; and
- An Iraq that helps bridge the sectarian divides in the Middle East.

I believe our objectives are achievable. The gains that have been made over the past year—at no small cost in blood and treasure—should not be allowed to unravel through precipitous actions. The repercussions of getting it wrong now likely would haunt us in the future.

Whatever you think of how we got to this place, the consequences of failure—of getting the end game wrong—are enormous. Some have lamented what they believe was an unwillingness to listen to our military professionals at the beginning of this war. I hope that now people will not dismiss as irrelevant the unanimous views of the field commander, Central Command Commander, and Joint Chiefs. All of the Nation's most senior military officers endorse this step-by-step path forward. I support these recommendations.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you so much, Mr. Secretary.

Admiral Mullen?

STATEMENT OF ADMIRAL MICHAEL G. MULLEN, USN, CHAIRMAN, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

Admiral MULLEN. Mr. Chairman, Senator Warner, distinguished members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I thank you also for your continued support of the men and women of the United States Armed Forces. I've been spending a lot of time with our troops these last 6 months, as I know many of you have as well. It's apparent to me that they and their families know how much you care, and that, regardless of which side of the aisle

you represent, you actually do represent all of them. We are grateful.

I know you've heard extensive testimony this week by Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus about Iraq, and I know you're interested in the military challenges we face in other places, such as Afghanistan. So, let me get right to it.

The Joint Chiefs and I fully supported the recommendations made by General Petraeus to the chain of command, that he complete the withdrawal of all surge brigades and that he be given time to evaluate and assess his situation before making any further force-structure decisions. That seemed prudent to me.

It's not a blank check. It's not an open-ended commitment of troops. It's merely recognition of the fact that war is unpredictable. That's why we also advised the President and Secretary Gates that General Petraeus's assessments of conditions on the ground be continuously made, rather than on a fixed schedule. More frequent views of exactly how we are doing, from a security perspective, is, in my view, the only way to ensure we make the right decisions at the right time. It is the speed and uncertainty of this war, not just the enemy itself, that we are battling. Such has always been the case in counterinsurgencies. Witness the lethal influence of Iran, the stepped-up attacks in the Green Zone, and the operations ongoing today in Basrah.

I give a lot of credit to General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker for their brilliant leadership over the past year. They understand, and have solved, many of the complex challenges of waging war against terrorists and extremists, while at the same time helping to build the foundations of a new nation. It's tough, grueling, messy, and, yes, even lengthy work.

The surge of forces assisted them in that effort. It has, without question and by any measure, helped to improve security. But, the surge was never intended to be the remedy for all things Iraq. It is designed, rather, to give our military leaders the forces they need to execute more effective tactics—which it did—and to provide Iraqi leaders the opportunity to work toward political reconciliation and economic progress—which it also did.

That such progress has been slower and of mixed success is, I believe, more a function of the difficulties of a representative government in Iraq than it is of the level of security enabled by military operations.

Our troops can open many doors, but they cannot force Iraqi leaders through them. As the last of the surge brigades come home, the U.S. military in Iraq will be focused on keeping those doors open on assisting the development of more and faster progress and on helping the Iraqi security forces defend their own country.

I can't be perfectly predictive, but I see no reason why we cannot accomplish these goals while also keeping open the option of an informed drawdown of forces throughout the remainder of the year. Such options are critical, because, while Iraq is rightly our most pressing priority right now, it is not the only one. I need the rest of our military focused on the rest of our challenges, which are, in this dangerous world, many and formidable.

With the bulk of our ground forces deployed to Iraq, we've been unable to prepare for, or deploy for, other contingencies in other

places. We are not training to full-spectrum capabilities. We are not engaging sufficiently with partner militaries. We cannot now meet extra force requirements in places like Afghanistan.

Six years of war have certainly sharpened one side of our sword. We now have in our ranks the expertise of some of the most combat-experienced troops we've had in our history. But, the other side of the blade, the major-combat and full-spectrum side, needs sharpening, and we must turn this around.

A quick word about Afghanistan. I'm deeply concerned. The Taliban is growing bolder, suicide attacks are on the rise, and so is the trade in illegal narcotics. In this economy-of-force operation, we do what we can. But, doing what we can in Afghanistan is not doing all that we should.

We recently sent 3,500 marines to the south in Afghanistan. They are there and already making a difference. But they're not enough. Requirements exist there that we simply cannot fill, and won't likely be able to fill until conditions improve in Iraq.

Continued NATO involvement and the commitment of more American forces, such as those the President has recently pledged, will remain vital to the long-term security of Afghanistan and our national interests there.

Let me conclude here, if I may, by echoing the Secretary's sentiments on the quality of our men and women in uniform. I've never seen them better. Though I hear and feel the strain they are bearing in each of my encounters, I cannot deny that they are driven by a sense of mission and purpose. They believe in what they're doing, they know they're having an impact, and they want to serve.

We must, from a leadership perspective, give them not only the tools to do so, but also the guidance, the counseling, the medical care, the support, and the time to do so safely and efficiently.

The President's announcement today that Active-Duty Army deployments will be cut from 15 to 12 months is a welcomed first step in preserving the health of our forces, and I am grateful for his decision, as are the brave soldiers in our Army.

Again, thank you for the continued support and leadership of this committee, as well as on behalf of our people and their families, and for your time today, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you so much, Admiral.

The first vote is on. We have about 4½ minutes left in that first vote, plus the 5-minute extra time which we're provided. I think I'm going to try to get my questions in, and those who get back in time can pick up from there. If there's nobody here, we will just stand adjourned for a few moments until we get back. You both are old pros at this problem, and we appreciate your understanding.

We'll have a 7-minute round.

Secretary Gates, your testimony, says that a brief pause for evaluation following the return to a presurge level will allow some analysis, you don't anticipate this period of review to be an extended one. Now, it's very different, your words, from those of General Petraeus. We pressed him very, very hard on whether or not he would describe his recommendation as a "brief pause." He pointedly refused to do that. He would not use the word "brief," he would not use the word "pause." You used both.

Then he has, in his recommendation, an "open-ended, unlimited period of time." The way he phrased it was that after a 45-day period, which gets him to September, during which he would do some evaluation, at that point he would "begin"—now we're in September—he would "begin a process of assessment," and then, over time, would determine what recommendations to make.

Now, were you aware of General Petraeus's testimony to that effect when you prepared your own testimony?

Secretary GATES. Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Are you aware of the fact that he refused to use the term "brief pause"—as a matter of fact, refused to put any kind of an estimate of time on his own reviews and assessments? Were you aware of that?

Secretary GATES. Yes, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. I think, to the average reader, here, there's a difference. Now, you can say that you support his recommendations, but there's no way you can paper over that difference between your saying you—hoping for a brief pause and his saying we're going to begin a period, open-ended, and that, over time, starting in September, there may be some recommendations. Would you agree that there's a difference here? You may want to describe why there's a difference, but would you at least acknowledge that there is some difference here in the way you described this upcoming period?

Secretary GATES. There certainly is a difference in the way we've described it. When I visited Baghdad in February, I spent quite a bit of time with General Petraeus, and he went through the—if you will, the geometry of the battlefield as he contemplated the five surge brigades coming out and how he would be spreading the forces out, or pulling back from some places, or changing who was responsible for security, moving it to the Iraqis, and so on. He made, I thought, a compelling case that once the five surge brigades were out, at the end of July, that there should be a period of—what I referred to in talking to the press at the time, a period evaluation and consolidation so we could see what the impact of having withdrawn a quarter of the brigade combat teams would be.

I continue to believe that that period of consolidation and evaluation makes sense. My view is that, in the context of a full year, and the fact that we went through a period, in December, January, February, or thereabouts, where we went 2½ to 3 months or so without any drawdowns, that a period of a month to 6 weeks or so made sense, in terms of just seeing what the impact was. Does the security situation hold with the withdrawal of those brigade combat teams?

My view is that he should be in a position, at the end of that 40-day—45-day period of evaluation and consolidation, to make a determination whether a next-further drawdown could take place of a brigade combat team or some elements thereof. I think that when he talks about a continuing period of evaluation, what he is talking about is that he will be making this kind of an assessment, beginning—in my view—in mid-September, making a decision, in terms of whether to make a further drawdown then, or whether to wait 2 or 3 more weeks or a period of time before making an addi-

tional judgment whether a subsequent drawdown or an initial further drawdown should be made.

I think, as the Chairman and I have both pointed out, if the conditions continue to improve in Iraq, as we have seen them improve over the last 14 or 15 months, then we believe the circumstances are in place for him to be able to recommend continuing drawdowns. But while we have used different words, I think that that certainly is my understanding and my expectation.

Chairman LEVIN. Mr. Secretary, these are his words, "At the end of that period"—that's 45 days—"we will commence a process of assessment to examine the conditions on the ground and, over time, determine"—that is an unlimited period of time. There's nothing in there about 30 days or 40 days. I particularly said, "Could that be a month?" He won't answer. "Could that be 2 months?" "I don't know." "Could that be 3 months?" "It may be."

Now, I know you must have been familiar with General Petraeus's testimony, and it is very different from what you're saying here and what, apparently, you recommended to the President. I think we ought to acknowledge it openly. I'll let you characterize your own testimony in this regard. But, there clearly is a difference. The question I'm asking you is, are you aware of the fact that General Petraeus refused to use the term "brief" or "pause," and he refused to use any idea of a time period for that second period that began in September—you're aware of the fact of his refusal?

Secretary GATES. One of the benefits of being Secretary of Defense, I suppose, is that I am more allowed to hope than the field commander is.

Chairman LEVIN. I hope you're doing more than hoping. I hope you're giving a hardheaded assessment of what you are recommending to the President.

Secretary GATES. What I've just described to you, Mr. Chairman, is what I have recommended to the President, and I believe it is consistent with the decisions the President has made.

Chairman LEVIN. When the President today, rejected the use of the word "pause"—you used the word "pause" in your testimony. The President explicitly, in his statement, refuses to use the word "pause."

Secretary GATES. I think they were in reference to different things. My statement of "pause" was pause in the drawdowns. The President was very explicit that we were not going to pause in our operations in Iraq.

Chairman LEVIN. The other question I wanted to ask you has to do—talking about "hope," you said, in September 2007, you hoped that we could get down to 100,000 troops in Iraq by January 2009. Do you still have that hope?

Secretary GATES. No, sir.

Chairman LEVIN. Finally, on the funds, on the reconstruction funds—Mr. Secretary, I find this, frankly, to be extraordinary, to put it mildly, that we have Ambassador Crocker coming before us, 2 days ago, saying that the United States is no longer involved in the physical reconstruction business. The same day, we get a letter from the DOD, asking us to shift almost $600 million into recon-

struction. Today, the President says that we're just about down to zero, in terms of reconstruction.

Now, it is unconscionable for a country with tens of billions of dollars of surplus money sitting in bank accounts—$30 billion, probably, in ours alone; they sell 2 million barrels of oil a day at $110-plus a barrel; we're paying $3.50, on the average for gasoline—they're building up these huge surpluses, we have this huge national deficit and debt, we're paying for their reconstruction, and the President is saying that they're getting down to zero in reconstruction, the same week his DOD is asking us to pour an additional $600 million into reconstruction.

I don't know if you've gotten the letter yet—apparently you didn't—but, we mentioned this to your Comptroller yesterday, that this is very troubling to me. If I had the power, as chairman, as I do in some areas, to actually disapprove a reprogramming request, I would disapprove this. I don't have that power in this area, because of a particular law that was passed. But, we do have the power to request that you withhold this shift of funds, and that you consider, during this period, whether or not you really want to make that kind of a shift. I think it's unconscionable. It runs smack into what the President assured the American people today. It runs exactly contrary to what the Ambassador said, 2 days ago. It just rubs everybody that I know of, of both parties, the wrong way. This is not a partisan issue. This is a commonsense issue about American dollars.

When you get my letter, would you please promptly get back—reconsider what the President said today and what Ambassador Crocker said, and I would hope you would withdraw that notice of a shift.

Secretary GATES. I will certainly respond to your letter, Mr. Chairman. I will say, the reprogramming was for the Commander's Emergency Response Programs (CERP).

Chairman LEVIN. No, it's not, those are not CERP funds. No, no, no.

Secretary GATES. And——

Chairman LEVIN. We're all for the CERP funds. That's not this issue.

Secretary GATES. But, I believe the reprogramming, Mr. Chairman, is for the CERP.

Chairman LEVIN. No, the CERP doesn't build Iraqi police stations, 55 police stations.

Secretary GATES. Well, I was unaware of the police stations, but it is certainly—I mean, the CERP is, basically, in the very short term, to give employment to Iraqis so they'll put their guns down and stop shooting at our soldiers.

Chairman LEVIN. We're all for the CERP fund. Everybody, I think, here has basically supported the CERP fund.

Secretary GATES. It may be the definition of the projects under the CERP. I don't know if the Chairman knows.

Chairman LEVIN. No, I just don't think that's what this is, and we'll give you a copy of this letter so you can take a look at it, if you want to today. That's not this issue. This is $600 million for construction of the size of police stations.

Senator Kennedy.

Senator KENNEDY [presiding]. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Secretary, in your opening comments, you talked about how your desire to have a bipartisan effort during the time as the Secretary of Defense—I think you should know, as well as Admiral Mullen, that many of us have differences with regards to the policy in Iraq, but I think all of us have enormous respect for your service, Admiral Mullen's and your comments, both, what you believe is in the best interest for the security of the country. We have our differences, but I think you should obviously know that members of this committee owe both of you the highest possible regard.

Let me, just for a moment, continue what Chairman Levin has mentioned and why I think there is at least a degree of confusion. Mr. Secretary, you mentioned the "brief pause," and I think you used the word "for consolidation and evaluation, and I do not anticipate this period of review to be an extended one." President Bush, today, said in his statement, "Petraeus will have all the time he needs for consolidation and evaluation." It is that dichotomy which brings the frustration, at least to me, and that, I think, is underlying the point that was being raised by the chairman. I think you've answered him. Unless there's something else that you want to say on it, I'll move on. I think it is that difference between what the President has said and what you have said. The chairman was talking about the difference between what General Petraeus himself had said before the committee. I think it's this difference that brings some confusion and some frustration, in terms of looking at this.

Secretary GATES. I actually think, Senator Kennedy, that there's really not a substantive difference here. I think that the place where we all start is the "decisions will be made." The place where General Petraeus, the President, and I all start is—and the chairman—is that decision will be made, in terms of subsequent drawdowns, based on the conditions on the ground. We intend to continue that process of evaluation. My view is, clearly the President, I think, was saying that he will defer to General Petraeus's evaluation of the situation on the ground, in terms of—and his continuing assessment of that—in terms of decisions on any further drawdowns. I agree with that statement, and I certainly support that statement.

My view is that the period of evaluation and consolidation is a 45-day period that General Petraeus has referred, and then I think he makes the initial judgment, right then, whether or not further drawdowns are possible at that point. He will continue to make that judgment all through the fall.

Senator KENNEDY. Admiral Mullen, listening to your testimony, you were talking about the doors being opened in Iraq, you said, "We can open doors. We can't force Iraqis to go through the doors. We can keep the doors open." It's just that kind of open-endedness that is of great concern to many of us, because it looks like what we are saying is that we are holding American service men and women hostage to the willingness of Iraqi politicians to make the political accommodations that are necessary in order to reach some kind of resolution there.

How long are we going to keep these doors open? Many of us believe that we have kept them open long enough and that we should say to the Iraqis it's time for them to assume responsibility for their security and for their defense. Now we're just saying we are going to keep the doors open, and it appears to many of us that we're going to keep the doors open while American service men and women are fighting and dying, and while the Department of Treasury is open to pour additional funds into the sands of Iraq.

Admiral MULLEN. Senator, in the other part of my statement—I certainly wanted to be clear that I don't see this as a wide-open commitment, an unending commitment. When I've previously testified here, I've talked about how the military solution is not going to be the one that solves all this; we can provide the security so there can be progress. That has clearly happened with the surge, the effects of the surge. The security has improved remarkably, and in that timeframe, there actually has been movement in the political realm. Not too many people, myself included, would have said, last summer or last fall, that the Iraqi Government would have passed these four laws which they have passed. They've made progress. There are still other ones that they have to pass. That there are clearly limits, in terms of how long we would provide that kind of security. One of the messages that I hope to send in this is the sense of urgency that they continue to move as rapidly as possible to provide for their own security—and their security forces have improved dramatically; to pass the laws that need to be passed, in terms of their own government; and to politically reconcile—and that's happened, both locally, provincially, as well as nationally, not like we'd like it to. So, it's really in that context that I'm talking about when I talk about having those doors open. They must take advantage of that.

Senator KENNEDY. There seem to be different views on those matters, Admiral, but let me move on, because we know that we have had statements that were made today about the President—which I welcome—who talks about shortening the deployment of our soldiers from 15 months to 12 months. We had Secretary Gates, on April 4. You confirmed that the President committed to our NATO allies the U.S. would send a significant additional contribution in troops to Afghanistan. I certainly welcome that.

All of us know, and Admiral Mullen has talked about this—the stress that is being put on our service men and women. Even if you're rotating the five brigades out of Iraq, those individuals have effectively burned up their time, and now we're talking about shortening the time from 15 months to 12 months, we're talking about the additional kinds of personnel that are going to be necessary in Afghanistan.

So, let me ask you, either Admiral Mullen or Secretary Gates—Admiral, you talked about, "The military must reduce the stress on the Army and the Marine Corps, or risk crossing an invisible red line." Secretary Gates, haven't we already crossed that red line and over-strained our troops? If we haven't crossed the red line, when do you think we will? Admiral Mullen, I'd like to hear from you, too.

Secretary GATES. I do not think we've crossed that red line. Clearly, the force is under strain, their families, in particular, are

under strain. Admiral Mullen's been to the theater more recently than I have, but I was there just a few weeks ago, and morale is high, they are determined and committed. We are watching all of the indicators, in terms of the health of the force, very carefully. I think all of the Chiefs would tell you that we are not past that red line. But, particularly with the Army and the Marine Corps, we are watching very carefully, and that's one of the reasons why we put such a premium on being in a position to reduce the deployment time for troop—for units that are deploying after the first of August to 12 months, so they can have—and that they will have 12 months at home.

Senator KENNEDY. Admiral?

It's difficult to see, with the stress that is on the military at the present time, the increased demand you're going to have, reducing the amount of time that they're going to be in rotation, and also putting additional kind of numbers into Afghanistan that you don't increase the kinds of pressure.

Secretary GATES. Senator——

Senator KENNEDY. Let me just—there is no other member of the Senate here, so let me just use up——

Secretary GATES. Could I just respond——

Senator KENNEDY. Sure, please.

Secretary GATES.—to the comment about Afghanistan?

Senator KENNEDY. Okay.

Secretary GATES. I made that comment, Senator, and encouraged the President to make the commitment he did, after long discussions with the Joint Chiefs, in full awareness of General Petraeus's recommendations, but also out of confidence that American troop levels in Iraq will be lower in the course of 2009.

Senator KENNEDY. I think you responded to the chairman asking about whether you thought the numbers were going to be down, and you indicated you didn't think so, in Iraq.

Secretary GATES. No, I did not. I expressed the hope that they would be.

Senator KENNEDY. On another subject, on this long-term security commitment, in the discussions that we had, Secretary Gates, on Iraq in a February 6 hearing of the committee, you said that there ought to be a great deal of openness and transparency to Congress. You gave the committee your word that the Senate would have an opportunity to review it before it was implemented. So, many of us welcomed that commitment—I'd like to ask you whether you believe Congress should have the opportunity to approve or disapprove any agreement, regardless of what it's called, if it affects our troops. With the country so deeply involved in Iraq and the Nation so deeply divided, shouldn't we in Congress have a right to be able to vote on the nature of any long-term security commitment?

Secretary GATES. Senator Kennedy, as we discussed in February, the agreement that is under negotiation is a standard Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). It will make no commitments. It commits the new President, in January, to nothing. It will not involve bases, it will not involve troop levels, and it will not involve security commitments to the Iraqis. I would say that if an agreement emerged in some way that impacted treaty-making authorities of the Senate, then obviously it would need to be sent up here, but

as long as it conforms to the standard kind of SOFAs, of which we have some 90 or 100 in place, none of which have been ratified by the Senate, I would think it is not necessary.

But again, I think the important thing, because of the involvement and the controversy associated with the war in Iraq, it's very important for the executive branch to be very open with Congress as we go forward with the negotiation of this SOFA.

Senator KENNEDY. In 1953 we ratified the SOFA with NATO, and President Eisenhower didn't bypass Congress. Congress even approved the Compact on Free Association during the Reagan administration, where we didn't have the kind of velocity and the strong feeling with regards to troops. There's precedent, and given the fact—the enormous power of this issue, the fact of American troops—I mean, if we have American troops in those areas, whether we have the agreements or there are not going to be agreements, they're going to be affected by whatever is understood by the Iraqi Government. So, it does seem to me that this is certainly something that ought to be considered by Congress.

My time has expired. Thank you very much.

Senator WARNER [presiding]. I thank my colleague.

I was very taken aback by your testimony, Mr. Secretary. That testimony reflects your belief of accountability in public office and your candor about the mistakes made. I want you to know, having been the chairman of this committee during most of that period, I accept the same level of responsibility for some of those mistakes, as do you, even though you came later on. We have to go forward in a manner that we think is best for the long-term interests of our national security. I judge in both you and Admiral Mullen, a willingness to, on a daily basis, look at all the options and do what we can to achieve the goals of enabling that country to exercise the reins of sovereignty.

I was thinking about the SOFA that's coming up and the Strategic Framework Agreement which is going to accompany two agreements. It sort of states that they're in a category of other nations of the world where we have SOFAs. It's a point of pride, as well as a point of resolving things that are needed by both the United States and Iraq.

It seems to me that, therein might be some leverage to achieve a greater degree of reconciliation. They've done some reconciliation. We know what it is. But, it's far short of what I believe the President and yourself had in mind in January, when the surge was launched. Clearly the surge provided, as the President said, the breathing space, but it simply has not resulted in the measure of reconciliation that we literally entrusted to Maliki and the rest of his government.

So, are these agreements a means by which to gain some leverage?

Secretary GATES. Senator Warner, I think we ought to use anything we can find in the toolbox to try and encourage the Iraqis to move forward on reconciliation. My own view is that we may have—things began to come together and to move—after what seemed like many months of stalemate in Baghdad, they moved several of these pieces of legislation, all within a period of a few weeks, earlier this year.

One of the things we're seeing is, all of the different elements in Iraq congratulating Maliki on taking on the situation in Basrah—the Kurds, Sunnis, and others. So we may be seeing a growing belief in Iraq, that the Government of Iraq is not sectarian, and that it does represent the interests of all Iraqis. So, this is clearly a work in progress, but I think it has accelerated in recent weeks, and we will need to continue doing everything that we can to push that process along.

I would just say, in addition, I think that the team that you had in front of this committee, 2 days ago, or 3 days ago, of Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus, is unlike anything I've seen since I joined the government, 42 years ago, in terms of being on exactly the same page and working with the Iraqi Government in trying to push them along in exactly the direction that you're describing.

Senator WARNER. Those two extraordinary public servants are working together as a team, like two strong horses trying to pull the wagon with the problems in it. That came through, time and time again, and I've had the privilege of working, certainly with the Ambassador for many years. He used to come up here and be part of the briefing team, before we even went into Iraq. I have a high degree of confidence in his judgment. I think he, likewise, is very pragmatic, recognizes mistakes were made—both of them—and that they stand accountable and with candor, they acknowledge it.

But back to the drug issue I raised with you. You had the opportunity to see my letter to——

Secretary GATES. Yes, sir.

Senator WARNER.—the President. I sent a copy to you. If you could enlighten me. Again, my concern was that this issue is so serious, in the minds of this Senator, that it had to be elevated—you had the heads of State and government there, and this was the forum, because we cannot stand by and just not do positive steps to rachet down, substantially—maybe we can't all do it in 1 year, but substantially eliminate those funds that are flowing to the aggressors that are fighting our troops and the troops of NATO.

Secretary GATES. It is clearly a huge problem. It came up in two different forums in Bucharest, first in a meeting of the foreign and defense ministers of the countries that are all in Regional Command South. The importance of dealing with it, the importance of an integrated strategy, the importance of particularly going after the labs, after the large landowners, and working with the Afghans, and trying to get rid of corrupt officials. It then came up again in the meeting that the heads of government had with President Karzai, and a number——

Senator WARNER. Actually, really the buck stops on his desk, in my judgment.

Secretary GATES. Yes.

Senator WARNER. It is his responsibility with his police and his other mechanisms of internal security.

Secretary GATES. As part of the Afghan Compact, in February 2006, primary responsibility for dealing with the narcotics problem passed to the Afghan Government. Now, they have a counternarcotics force with an authorized size of about 3,000, and they

have about 2,100 onboard. They have some helicopters—a dozen or so helicopters. They're working with the Drug Enforcement Agency, they're working with us. But, also, the United Kingdom and NATO are trying to figure out how we can support them to do a better job. Supreme Headquarters, Allied Powers, Europe is working on a plan, has addressed this issue on how the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) can do a better job of supporting the Afghan Government. The results of that assessment are classified, but I'd be happy to provide it to you and to the committee for the record.

[The information referred to follows:]

[Deleted.]

Secretary GATES. There is clearly an understanding on the part of the NATO governments, from the heads of government on down, of the importance of this, and I will tell you, they were very direct with President Karzai in the meeting in Bucharest.

Senator WARNER. I will avail myself of that opportunity, and that pleases me.

Admiral, would you like to comment on that?

Admiral MULLEN. Just that it's as critical as you say it is, Senator Warner. It is a concern that troops in the field have, and actually some of our troops are very involved in meeting this challenge, as well, particularly some of the labs and that kind of work. It is something that is very much on their minds, and that a long-term comprehensive, effective strategy be put in place is critical to a successful outcome in this country.

Senator WARNER. The current senior officer in the country—I know him as a matter of fact, on earlier visits he was stationed there—he has spoken out very frankly on this. I had a long talk with his successor, General Kern, who's coming up for confirmation before this committee shortly, and he, likewise, is concerned.

Well, we have to do something. I'll come back, but, I mean, I leave this issue knowing that both of you are doing everything you can to reduce that threat to our troops from the drug money.

Joe?

Senator LIEBERMAN [presiding]. Thanks, Senator Warner.

Thanks to you both for being here, and for your testimony and service.

I appreciate the opening statements both of you made. I want to read from the close of your statement, Mr. Secretary. "Some have lamented what they believe was an unwillingness to listen to our military professionals at the beginning of this war. I hope that now people will not dismiss as irrelevant the unanimous views of the field commander, CENTCOM commander, and Joint Chiefs. All of the Nation's most senior military officers endorse this step-by-step path forward. I support these recommendations."

I appreciate that, both because of the history that you referred to, but also because there was a lot of media speculation that there was intense disagreement within the military about how to go forward. I've been through this enough now to discount what I see in the media. But, the important point is that the recommendation General Petraeus brought before us, and that you and the President and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs have now accepted, is

really the unanimous recommendation of our military leadership. Admiral, I'm——

Admiral MULLEN. It is.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Yes. I appreciate that, and I think it's very important that Members of Congress and the public know that, that the President has acted on the unanimous recommendation of our military leadership.

As this is going on—and, look, I have a point of view on the war, that you know, and I think the report of General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker showed real progress. They didn't overstate the case. It's reversible. But, militarily, the numbers that you cited—real progress, politically and economically, in Iraq. There are now different lines of questioning being raised by critics of what we're doing in Iraq, one of which I think has some merit, although it may be overdone, and that's the one I want to ask you to comment on, which is the economic side of this, the concern expressed that the Iraqis are now putting some money in the bank, based on the improvement in their oil output and, of course, the increase in the international price of oil.

So, I wanted to ask, Mr. Secretary or Admiral, if you'd talk about to what extent are we asking the Iraqis, and are the Iraqis now picking up costs of either the military or economic part of our involvement in their country? Two, what thoughts you have about what more we can ask of them in the months and years ahead.

Secretary GATES. This is one place, Senator Lieberman, where I think there is true bipartisan agreement——[Laughter.]

Senator LIEBERMAN. I think you're right.

Secretary GATES.—across the entire political spectrum, that the time has come for the Iraqis to pick up the bill for their own economic reconstruction and equipping of their forces, and so on. I think the figures that the President was referring to today, when he said a 10-to-1 differential, in terms of investment, is that the Iraqis have $13 billion in their budget for reconstruction, and there's nothing in our budget.

I'm going to come back to the chairman of the committee, here, in a second, with an apology.

But, my understanding is that in 2007, out of $2 billion in foreign assistance the State Department (DOS) got for Iraq, only about $520 million went for reconstruction. They've asked for a little less than a billion in foreign assistance. If you had the same proportion, it would be similar to that.

Maybe I'm using a little of Senator Lieberman's time to offer you an apology, Mr. Chairman, but I've been handed a note, and, as strange as it may seem, leading the largest and most complex organization in the world, there are actually things that go on that I don't know about. The $600-million reprogramming that you talked about is not for CERP, and I will take a very close look at it——

Chairman LEVIN [presiding]. Thank you.

Secretary GATES.—for the reasons that you cite. But, it gets to the point——

Senator LIEBERMAN. Right.

Secretary GATES.—that Senator Lieberman has raised. I think this is an area where there is broad agreement, it is time for the Iraqis to spend some of their money.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Should they be spending more of their money, not only on their own military costs, but on some of ours, which, of course, has happened in previous American involvements in conflicts, both in the Middle East, but also post-second World War, for instance?

Secretary GATES. We haven't really discussed that, at this point. The focus has really been more on their spending money on their own forces and on their economic reconstruction. They clearly have a lot of money they need to spend in those areas. We've now, I think, actually delivered about $2 billion worth of arms and equipment, under foreign military sales, to them that they bought with their own money. There are several billion dollars more on order. Their forces, we will be asking for a significantly smaller amount for Iraqi train-and-equip in fiscal year 2009 than we have in the past.

But, the question, in terms of whether there are some of our costs they ought to pick up, I'm not aware that we've really begun to consider that yet. It's been more of making—one of the concerns, again, the chairman raised, is getting them—they can budget the money, but one of the——

Senator LIEBERMAN. Right.

Secretary GATES.—problems they've had is getting them to execute their budget. Part of it's a lack of expertise, part of it is a lack of trained people, and part of it, in the past, has probably been politics. We think they're making headway on all of those.

Senator LIEBERMAN. It's good to hear. I hope you'll start to think about that, because I'm sure some of that bipartisan agreement on this question of the Iraqis picking up more of the costs of the conflict will be expressed, at some point in Congress, urging you to do that.

I want to ask a second question. There's been a lot of concern expressed about the negotiations going on for a SOFA for a longer-term military relationship with Iraq. I'm thinking here, let's look to that day when it's post-conflict, when our troops are not involved in actual combat. Obviously, there's been a lot of controversy in the presidential campaign about Senator McCain's comment that we may have troops there a longer time after the war is over, for peacekeeping. Some seem to suggest that for us to have a longer-term military presence in Iraq would be somehow dangerous or destabilizing for the region.

I don't want to coach the witness too much, but it does strike me that if one takes that position, then you have to answer the question. "What about our presence in Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and throughout the Arab world, throughout the Middle East?"

I wanted to ask you if you would respond to the concerns about a longer-term, essentially, military-to-military agreement between a free, sovereign Iraq and the United States of America.

Secretary GATES. I think that first of all, the states and their—and I'll invite Admiral Mullen to comment—I think, with one exception, virtually all of the states in the region would like to see the United States maintain some kind of a presence in Iraq, and not just as a stabilizing force, but to continue the hunt for al Qaeda, to continue going after—helping the Iraqi Government go

after extremists, and so on. So, we are talking, at least in my opinion, of a force that is a fraction of the force that we have there now.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Admiral Mullen, do you want to add to that?

Admiral MULLEN. Yes. Senator, most believe we will need a long-term presence there, that is, as the Secretary said, obviously much, much smaller than we have had.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Right.

Admiral MULLEN. I'll just use the Basrah operation as an example. While they moved a division's worth of forces, there are capabilities they just don't have yet—the intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and logistics, and there are a lot of them—what we call enablers, so that they can take care of their own security. So, there will be some of that. This is a sovereign country and if they want training assistance, which is what we do routinely in lots of countries around the world, that would be part of this. I would expect that would be part of this, as well.

This is a part of the world that is as unstable as any, and so, to the degree that our forces have that kind of footprint that provide the kind of stabilizing influence that we often do, I would expect us to be there.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Secretary Gates, I assume that the one country in the region that you would guess doesn't want us to have a long-term military presence in Iraq is Iran.

Secretary GATES. That would be correct, Senator.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thank you both.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Lieberman.

Thank you, Secretary Gates, for your clarification.

Let me just give you a couple of other numbers. We've expended, on reconstruction so far, $27.5 billion on just three funds; $12 billion is unspent that's been appropriated. So, there's another $12 billion to look at, as to whether or not we should not tell the Iraqis that rather than our spending that unspent $12 billion that's previously been appropriated, that we're going to look to them to pick up that slack. That's in addition to this "$600 million" letter that you'll be getting.

Let me just give you one incident that I shared with General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker. When I was there a month ago, and I was talking to one of our generals, and he said, "Senator, I was asking an Iraqi general, the other day, this question." He said, "I asked him, 'Why is it that we Americans are cleaning up your cities at our expense?' His answer was, 'As long as you're willing to pay for it, we're going to let you do it.'"

That's the dependency. That's what's been created here, and that's why I think there is a real feeling in the country which is united on that issue, and I think, a bipartisan feeling, hopefully, at least on that question. We appreciate your taking a close look at that request.

There's another number out there which I want to ask you about. By the way, on the budget, when you said that they have $13 billion in their budget for capital costs, you very properly point out that the issue is whether they're going to spend it. I just want to reinforce that point, because in 2006 they had a budget of $6.2 bil-

lion, the Iraqi budget; they spent less than a quarter of that. In 2007, as of August 31, they had spent, depending on which figure you use, either 4 percent, which is what the GAO said, or 24 percent, according to the White House computations—somewhere between 4 and 24 percent of their 2007 capital budget, which was $10 billion. So, the issue isn't a number that they put on the paper, it's what they spend which is the critical number. They have the money. It's sitting in our banks. We know that.

Mr. Secretary, these are 2 million barrels of oil a day, at $110 a barrel. That's $200 million a day. The U.N. is going around trying to get the world to pick up costs for Iraqi people who have left their homes, instead of the Iraqis paying for the Iraqi people who have left their homes. Why is it that we're paying money, and that the U.N. is paying money, for Iraqi people who have been either removed forcefully or fled their homes—there's 2 million in Iraq and 2 million out of Iraq, approximately. Someone's going to have to pay for them; we understand that. But, why isn't the Iraqi Government paying for that? That's less than a billion dollars the U.N. is seeking. They get that in 5 days' worth of oil sales.

Secretary GATES. Well, again, Mr. Chairman, I think that, as I suggested to Senator Lieberman, I think a big part of the problem here has been the Iraqi capacity to execute their budget, not a lack of willingness to do it. We have, for example, just sent 12 experts from the Department of the Treasury to work with the different ministries in Iraq, to try and help them figure out, "How do you execute a budget? How do you get money to the provinces? How do you get contracts?" This is all new for the Iraqis.

Chairman LEVIN. I'm sorry, it's just not acceptable. Cutting a check from an account that they have in New York, Mr. Secretary, I just think it's totally unacceptable that we say they don't know how to cut a check. Do you know how much money they pledged last year to the U.N. for the support of their own Iraqi people who have been pushed out or fled their homes? Do you happen to have that article? I think it was something like $25 million. $25 million. That's a pledge. I don't even know if they followed through on the pledge. We have a responsibility to those people, by the way. I happen to feel that very deeply. But, my gosh, so do the Iraqis have a responsibility to their own people. We're spending more of our money, by far, on Iraqi refugees than the Iraqi Government is spending. The only reason we hear on that is that they don't have the capacity to cut a check to the U.N.? It doesn't wash. It's another example of a failure to force the Iraqi Government to take responsibility for their own country. It's just another example of that.

Here's what I asked Ambassador Crocker about the number of employees that we have that are working on reconstruction. These are not your employees, these are not people working at the bases, these are not the Sons of Iraq, these are U.S. Agency for International Development and Army Corps reconstruction people—100,000 people on our payroll. The President describes this as coming to an end, today? It doesn't compute.

What we're going to need you to do—and I really believe that there's a lot of bipartisan support for what I'm saying—I really need you to take a look at these monies that are in our budgets, that are unexpended, and—these are the DOD budgets, these are

reconstruction funds. We think there's $12 billion, at least, unexpended. If you would take a look at that and get back to this committee with what can and should be covered by the Iraqis, it would be very helpful.

[The information referred to follows:]

I agree that Iraqis should pay for an increasingly greater share of the costs associated with reconstruction and stabilization. The Government of Iraq (GOI) has already assumed responsibility for the bulk of reconstruction costs. The 2008 GOI budget, with Iraq's mid-year supplemental, includes more than $21 billion for capital expenditures and $11 billion for the Iraqi security forces (ISF). The U.S. fiscal year 2008 budget in contrast includes $3 billion for the ISF Fund (ISFF), $1.7 billion for the Commanders' Emergency Response Program (CERP), and $50 million for the Task Force for Business and Stability Operations (TFBSO).

In fact, the GOI has increased its spending for the ISF by about $2 billion every year since 2005. For 2009, the Iraqi security budget is expected to reach $11 billion. In addition, the GOI is increasingly using the Foreign Military Sales program to equip and train its forces. By building Iraqi capacity and transitioning costs to the GOI, we have reduced our ISFF request for fiscal year 2009 to $2.0 billion. No funds will be requested for TFBSO.

The GOI began to assume responsibility for payments to the 54,000 Sons of Iraq (SoI) in the Baghdad area beginning October 2008, thereby covering $15.5 million in monthly payments previously funded through CERP. The gradual transition has been positive with both GOI and SoI leaders supporting the process. The GOI launched a $270 million Iraqi CERP in April 2008 and has provided a total of $550 million for post-kinetic reconstruction in Basra, Mosul, Sadr City, and other cities. In the past, these efforts to enhance stability and cement hard-won security gains could have fallen to U.S. Commanders with CERP funding.

Although recent, tentative security gains and improvements in GOI capacity have allowed us to hand over programs and associated costs, DOD programs remain indispensable to the U.S. Government counterinsurgency strategy. By enabling commanders in the field to respond quickly to urgent needs. CERP has proven to be one of our most successful counterinsurgency weapons. ISFF helps safeguard our investment in Iraq by ensuring a functional and effective 1SF. Any effort to curtail these programs would provide new openings for extremists to regain the initiative they lost in 2007, decrease our ability to build sustainable security conditions with the ISF, and hamper the further drawdown of U.S. forces.

We will continue to look for activities that can and should be funded by the Iraqis. Transitioning these costs to an increasingly capable GOI and redeploying our troops as security improves and Iraqi forces assume responsibility constitute a return on our successes in Iraq.

Chairman LEVIN. I think it would put us on a path, which is a kind of path you described in your opening statement, about a desire that this be put on a bipartisan course. You told me that, the first day that you came in my office, when you were nominated, and I believed you then, and I believe you now, that that is your desire, to try to find a path which can get bipartisan support. This is a element which I believe can get bipartisan support.

The last question, if no one else is here—I hope that—we're going to have a few more coming back—I was over there at the Senate; I can only tell you that there are so many people, so many colleagues of mine who were there voting, stuck there, because they obviously wanted to be here. We did make an effort to get these votes delayed; I want you to know that.

My final question has to do with Afghanistan, and it goes to you, Admiral, because you, I think, made reference to Afghanistan in your statement. You indicated, I believe, that we have inadequate troops, that we may need to have more troops in Afghanistan. You said that—at least earlier in the month, and you, perhaps, said something similar today, which I may have missed—that there are force requirements in Afghanistan that we cannot currently meet,

and that the high level of forces in Iraq doesn't allow us to fill the need that we have in Afghanistan. You said in December, "It's simply a matter of resources, of capacity. In Afghanistan, we do what we can; in Iraq, we do what we must."

There's going to be a reduction from a 15-month deployment to a 12-month deployment—very regrettably, starting in August, which makes it too hollow for many of us. But, nonetheless, that's what the President has decided. So, this reduction is not going to help people who are already there. But, nonetheless, that reduction has been announced today by the President, to begin 4 or 5 months from now. How does that affect the Afghanistan picture? If you haven't already answered it. If you've already answered that, then I'll read it. But, if you have not answered that question, perhaps you could——

Admiral MULLEN. The reduction from 15 to 12 months most significantly affects what I believe—the health of the force, because it takes—these deployments, which I have believed for some time, are just—they're just too long. It really isn't going to affect availability for troops for Afghanistan. What will affect that is more troops being available, and the only relief valve that I see out there that would provide that, would be levels of forces in Iraq. So, I'd need to come down—we'd need to come down a certain number of brigades before we could start to meet the legitimate force requirements that we have in Afghanistan that we just can't fill.

Chairman LEVIN. All right. I said that was my last question, but I do have one more that has to do with the militias. There's a ban that the Prime Minister has placed on the Sadrists and on their militia. Does that ban extend to Hakim's Badr Corps and all other militias, as well as to the Mahdi Army?

Admiral MULLEN. I think it is specific, but I don't know.

Chairman LEVIN. Specific to what?

Admiral MULLEN. I think it's just to Sadr's—to the Jaish al Mahdi (JAM) and to Sadr's militia, and not to——

Chairman LEVIN. Because that would be——

Admiral MULLEN.—the Badr Corps.

Chairman LEVIN.—that would be a real problem, if it's only limited to his opponents, his competitors——

Admiral MULLEN. Well, I'd have to——

Chairman LEVIN.—in which

Admiral MULLEN.—I'd have to——

Chairman LEVIN. You can double check that——

Admiral MULLEN.—check and get back——

Chairman LEVIN.—because——

Admiral MULLEN. Yes, sir. I'll do that.

Chairman LEVIN.—Article 9 of the Iraqi constitution already prohibits the formation of military militia, outside of the framework of the armed forces. That's a constitutional prohibition. I don't know if this recently announced ban, whether it's narrow or broad, will stick any more than the already existing constitutional prohibition will. I'm not particularly optimistic that it will. But, in any event, if it is not a broad ban for all militias, the way the constitution provides, then I think the legislation, which is the subject the benchmark provides, it would really create a problem, in terms of

selectivity. If you could get back to us on that, that would be helpful, as well.

[The information referred to follows:]

[Deleted.]

Chairman LEVIN. I want to make sure none of my colleagues are on their way back. [Pause.]

Okay, Senator Reed is on his way back, and there are others, as well, but he's literally on his way. With your indulgence—you've made an apology to me today, we're grateful for that; you are always open in that regard. I'd like to emulate you. [Laughter.]

I apologize for this interruption.

We will stand in recess until Senator Reed or someone else comes back to take the gavel. We do know he's on his way back. So, we stand in recess. [Recess.]

Senator WARNER [presiding]. I thank our distinguished witnesses for their indulgence today. We have had a series of votes; and, thus far, I've run back and forth and made every one. I have to leave shortly, but, I'd like to ask a few questions now.

I would say to our witnesses that a number of Senators I visited with on the floor are coming over after, hopefully, a final-passage vote, here shortly. I think the staff will let us know when that vote begins and ends.

Admiral Mullen, on April 2, 2008, you said, "Having forces in Iraq don't, at the level they're at, allow us to fill the need that we have in Afghanistan. Equally broadly, around the world there are other places we would put forces or capabilities, not so much brigade combat teams as other kind of enabling capabilities of small training teams that we just can't, because of the pressure that is on our force structure now in CENTCOM. I think we'll continue to be there until conditions allow us to start to be able to reduce our force levels in Iraq."

Admiral MULLEN. Yes, sir.

Senator WARNER. Would you expand on that, sir?

Admiral MULLEN. Just available forces, that we have additional force requirements for—specifically for Afghanistan, up to three additional brigades——

Senator WARNER. Now, this is on top of the——

Admiral MULLEN. Yes.

Senator WARNER.—marines that are going in now.

Admiral MULLEN. Yes, sir. The marines—actually, from a fighting/combat standpoint, I'm pretty comfortable this year in Afghanistan. But, there are additional requirements we've had for a training brigade—so, about 3,000 trainers——

Senator WARNER. Training the Afghan——

Admiral MULLEN.—training the Afghan army and police.

Senator WARNER.—and police.

Admiral MULLEN. The marines are sending, basically, two battalions this year—one of them will be dedicated to training, and—

Senator WARNER. Training.

Admiral MULLEN.—the other to combat. But, they leave in the November timeframe. So they're partially filling those combat and training requirements right now, but those will still be there.

We have a requirement for a training brigade and for up to two additional combat brigades in Afghanistan, down the road, and we need to—I mean, we have it now, and we're not going to be able to fill that until we have forces that are released from other obligations, principally in Iraq, at the brigade size.

In addition, I have requirements in other theaters around the world that wouldn't necessarily be brigade combat teams, but that would be smaller units that do training with various militaries around the world or do exercises and those kinds of things, which are mitigating or preventative capabilities for the long term that we would normally be doing, some of which we are doing, but we're not doing it to the level that——

Senator WARNER. The level that you——

Admiral MULLEN.—we would be.

Senator WARNER. Yes.

Admiral MULLEN. Most of the pressure is on the brigade combat teams, specifically, and the enabling—the significant enabling capabilities that it takes to fight and—in Iraq and in Afghanistan—the intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities, and also the trainers, both in Iraq, as well as Afghanistan.

Senator WARNER. Let's clarify. You would add those brigades. What percentage would that increase the United States force structure in there? Now, your force structure is divided between those American forces that are working with NATO—as a part of NATO; then we have the independent force structure out here for the U.S. Would those brigades be going into the NATO structure or our own structure?

Admiral MULLEN. They would notionally be going in—notionally into the NATO structure, but, essentially—and it would be three brigades worth 10,000, 11,000, and 12,000 that—those kinds of numbers, in terms of overall size of the force.

The other place we find ourselves is, we're growing the Army and the Marine Corps at a time—from the Army to the active-Duty Army—I think it's at 525,000. So, we're drawing to 547,000 over the next couple of years. So, we find a great demand on the forces right now, at a time we're growing. In 2 or 3 years, there'll be more capability. That will provide some relief. Same in the Marine Corps. But that growth isn't going to provide much relief in the 2009 or 2010 timeframe.

Senator WARNER. We'd better be very cautious that someone doesn't translate your comments to say we may be there 3 or 4 years more in Afghanistan. That may be the case, but I think we should proceed very carefully before we try and reach a benchmark of a date when we're there.

So, the augmentation of our forces, given the actions of Congress and the appropriations to fund to enlarge both the Army and the Marine Corps, as you say, will not come to full bear until late 2009, correct?

Admiral MULLEN. Well, actually the growth is out to 2010 and 2011. I mean, when we really have——

Senator WARNER. Out to 2010 and 2011.

Admiral MULLEN.—all that capability.

Senator WARNER. So, I was trying to focus on the interim period.

Admiral MULLEN. Yes, sir.

Senator WARNER. Do you think that we would contribute three combat brigades to the current NATO structure?

Admiral MULLEN. If Iraqi forces came down far enough, that would be that——

Senator WARNER. I see.

Admiral MULLEN.—and it is the judgment of the Chiefs—that's the next priority.

The third piece of this, though, is to bring some of those—a brigade home, or two, at some point, because we need to start building dwell time——

Senator WARNER. Correct.

Admiral MULLEN.—which gets relief on the stress on the force.

So, those are the three big pieces right now that have an extraordinary amount of pressure on our forces.

Senator WARNER. Now, the President announced, today—you also mentioned it, Mr. Secretary—in the President's speech, he says, we'll also ensure that our Army units will have at least a year home for every year in the field. Now, with the anticipated augmentation of three brigades to Afghanistan, are we going to be able to hold tight on the tour of 12 months and a minimum of 12 at home?

Secretary GATES. Let me comment, and then invite Admiral Mullen to comment.

The three-brigade figure comes out of a view of the ISAF commander that that's what he could use. We were very careful in Bucharest that the President not make a specific commitment or a specific period of time when additional U.S. forces might be available. So, I think it's an open question whether—how much of that three-brigade request the United States would be prepared to fill, or could fill. That decision will almost certainly need to be made by the next President of the United States. So, what we're really talking about is capabilities here.

But, I would say that the Chiefs feel very strongly—and I'll let the Chairman speak to this—but, the Chiefs feel very strongly about the dwell-time issue. A big part of coming back to 12-months deployed is making sure they have a year at home.

One of the things that——

Senator WARNER. At a minimum.

Secretary GATES. Yes, sir. Our goal actually would be to move to 1 year deployed, 2 years at home——

Senator WARNER. Two years at home.

Secretary GATES.—for the Active-Duty Force, and maybe even, ultimately, 3 years; and, for the Guard and Reserve, 1 year mobilized, and 5 years at home, would be the goal ultimately that we're headed to. Your support of our proposals for growing the Army and the Marine Corps are really critical to making that happen.

Senator WARNER. Well, Congress is foursquare behind you, Mr. Secretary, and——

Secretary GATES. Did you want——

Senator WARNER.—you, Admiral.

Secretary GATES.—to add anything?

Admiral MULLEN. No, sir. This is a—we look at these requirements that we have. This goes back to the discussions we've had

about Afghanistan being an economy-of-force campaign. We have a requirement for that one training brigade and two other brigades.

Senator WARNER. This will be refined, on the occasions you have this period of reflection, once you draw down the surge forces. Is that correct?

Admiral MULLEN. Yes.

Senator WARNER. Fine.

On Pakistan, gentlemen—I'll ask both of you to comment—it's been a major ally in this conflict, in Afghanistan. Much of our logistics comes across the territories of Pakistan. We've seen quite a turbulence in the political structure, and it is yet to be resolved. At the same time, we see the threat growing from the level of insurgents up in Waziristan, on that border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, that there's no diminution in that threat. How are we going to deal with that, Mr. Secretary?

Secretary GATES. First of all, I think some credit is due to the Pakistanis, not only for allowing us the logistical supply routes and so on, but they've had over 100,000 troops deployed up in the northern and western part of Pakistan. I think they've suffered 3,000 or so killed in action. They've killed a lot of terrorists up there. They are a force principally trained to deal with their longtime adversary to the east, and so, clearly, we have some opportunities for training. But, we also have——

Senator WARNER. Mr. Secretary, I have a problem.

Secretary GATES.—to let the civilian——

Senator WARNER. I have 3 minutes to make it to the floor.

Secretary GATES. Okay.

Senator WARNER. If you'd finish that, for the record.

Secretary GATES. Okay.

Senator WARNER. Thank you.

[The information referred to follows:]

Pakistan is a key partner in the war on terror and plays a major role in our long-term efforts to build a stable Afghanistan. Materials for delivery to coalition forces operating in Afghanistan transit through Pakistan, including approximately 40 percent of fuel and 84 percent of all containerized cargo. The security of the border region with Afghanistan, therefore, is vital to the war on terror and Pakistan's internal security. The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) border region with Afghanistan is a largely ungoverned space that the July 2007 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) identifies as a place where Taliban and al Qaeda forces recruit, train, and equip fighters and infiltrate them into Afghanistan. Pakistan recognizes the threat posed by its rugged 1,500 mile-long border with Afghanistan and has improved security by stationing approximately 120,000 military and paramilitary forces there and strengthening border controls.

Since 2001, Pakistani military and paramilitary forces have conducted 91 major and countless small operations in support of the war on terror; it has captured or killed more al Qaeda and Taliban than any other coalition partner. Following the increase in Pakistani military and security operations in the FATA, the number of retaliatory suicide bombings and ambushes increased dramatically. In response to these attacks Pakistan intensified its efforts to combat extremists, resulting in the death or capture of a number of Taliban leaders in 2007. In the past 5 years, Pakistani soldiers have sustained more than 1,400 combat deaths (700 since July 2007) and more than 2,400 wounded in action.

Pakistan has recognized, however, that it cannot rid its territory of violent extremists by military means alone—it must also create an environment inhospitable to terrorism and extremism. In 2006, Pakistan requested U.S. support in developing and funding a comprehensive Sustainable Development Plan to deny terrorists the ability to exploit the under-governed FATA through economic and social development, and strengthening effective governance in border areas. This plan is a 9-year, $2 billion initiative which will provide services, upgrade infrastructure, promote the

sustainable use of natural resources, and bolster commercial activity. The U.S. is seeking $750 million in support of infrastructure development, social welfare, and capacity building elements of the program over the next 5 years. The governance element aims to help Pakistan extend its writ into the FATA by re-establishing the pre-eminence in local politics of the Government of Pakistan including recognized tribal elders and political agents. To complement and support this effort the U.S. developed the Security Development Plan (SDP) for Pakistan's Western Border Areas. The Department of Defense (DOD) is seeking approximately $200 million annually from a variety of authorities, including DOD counternarcotics (section 1004 and section 1033), Global Train and Equip (section 1206), and an authority specifically designed to train and equip the Frontier Corps. The SDP is the security element of the U.S. Government's 6-year plan that is designed to enhance the ability of Pakistan's military and security forces to secure its border with Afghanistan and deny safe haven for extremists.

It may be several years before Pakistan's comprehensive strategy to render the remote tribal areas inhospitable to terrorists, insurgents and other violent extremists can be measured for success. However, Pakistan is making progress toward that goal. In the fall of 2007, positive indicators included the actions taken by the government to evict the extremists occupying the Red Mosque and its increased pressure on the Taliban leadership in Quetta. These indicators suggest Pakistan is willing to shoulder significant burdens to target the Taliban, al Qaeda, and other violent extremists who enjoy safe haven on Pakistani territory. It remains to be seen, however, if the newly-elected civilian government maintain pressure on these extremists and continue work to eliminate the safe havens in the border region. The United States stands ready to offer continued support and cooperation as Pakistan undertakes this difficult challenge.

Senator WARNER. May I compliment you on going through Denmark en route to the NATO conference. That country, although small, made a valuable contribution to this operation in Afghanistan, and their troops come and fight, just as the U.S. troops.

Secretary GATES. I met with some of those troops when I was in Copenhagen.

Senator WARNER. I know you did. Thank you.

Excuse me, gentlemen.

Chairman LEVIN [presiding]. Senator Reed.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, gentlemen, for not only your testimony, but for your service.

Secretary Gates, I was listening to your opening statement, and it seems now that the parameters for success in Iraq are, as you describe it, an ally against extremists and a nation that can govern and defend itself. The first point raises the curious relationship between the Iranians and the Iraqis. Are they truly an ally with us against what some people would call some of the extreme policies of the Iranians?

Secretary GATES. I think one of the things that has happened over the past year or so, and perhaps one of the most significant outcomes of the Maliki government initiative in Basrah, is that they have increasingly become aware and become educated to the realities of what Iran is doing, in terms of meddling in Iraq, in supporting groups that are adversaries of the government, in their influence in the south, and particularly around Basrah, and their supply of weapons and so on to people who are opposing the government. I think that this has been a real eye-opener for them.

I think that there has long been a religious connection between the two, because of the location of the holy sites. The Iraqis obviously, under Saddam Hussein, were huge adversaries of the Iranians. But, I think that the Iraqi Government today is quite aware and increasingly concerned about Iranian activities inside their country.

Senator REED. Well, I think they are, but I don't know if this is a recent revelation. I think you understand, probably better than most, that, for example, Hakim spent a great deal of the Iraq-Iran war in Iraq. The Badr Brigade was organized by the Iranian forces, presumably still have close contacts with Iranians, maybe not in a military capacity. But, one of the problems here is that the Iranians, as Ambassador Crocker pointed out, have close ties with practically every Shiite organization and with Kurdish officials, and I would hesitate to say maybe even Sunni officials.

So, one of the points that was made, I think very eloquently, yesterday when we had our panel, was the conflict between attempting to stabilize Iraq, given the huge influence of the Iranians and suggestions by some in the administration that we consciously destabilize Iran. It was described as, basically, contradictory objectives. Would you comment on that?

Secretary GATES. I think our focus has certainly been on trying to stop the Iranian activities that have involved the supply of weapons and improvised explosive devices that have been used against our troops, and we've been pretty aggressive in that respect.

I think these connections with Iran, as you say, go back quite a ways with a number of the Shiite leaders and politicians in Iran. I think what they are coming to understand is that Iranian influence has a significant malicious side that is contrary to their interests as Iraqis. I think, in the past few months we've seen them beginning to take some actions that indicate, not only an awareness, but a willingness to act on it.

Senator REED. Thank you.

Admiral Mullen, the President announced, today, that tours of the Army will begin to phase down to 12 months, which I think is welcome news for many, many soldiers who are——

Admiral MULLEN. Right.

Senator REED.—serving, and who are yet to serve. Does this require an increased call-up of National Guard and Reserve brigades to maintain the force structure in Iraq because we've shortened the tour of the units that are in the field now?

Admiral MULLEN. Not in the planning that I'm aware of right now, it doesn't.

Senator REED. Is that——

Admiral MULLEN. This commences August 1.

Senator REED. Why?

Admiral MULLEN.—for troops deploying after August 1.

Senator REED. As you project force levels, going through until next year or beyond, I presume you're at least working on a 18-month to 2-year cycle, are you showing a decrease in forces? Is that one reason why we don't have to call on additional Reserve and National Guard components?

Admiral MULLEN. We're building some capability. I think, next year we come up two brigades. It's about two brigades a year. That's part of it. At this level, if we stayed at this level that we're at right now for a long period of time, clearly just the math would tell you that it would potentially impact that. I just haven't seen that, from a planning standpoint, at this point.

Senator REED. So, if, in fact, the commitment to 12 months is irreversible, then eventually, based on force structure alone, we have two options—either to drop the force structure in Iraq or to significantly, or at least to increase the number of National Guard or Reserve brigades that will be called up.

Admiral MULLEN. Clearly, if we are going to sustain this over a long period of time at the number of brigades we have there right now, that we would have that kind of impact. I think that would be longer-term, as opposed to immediately in front of us.

Back to your point, we're planned pretty well out for the next couple of years.

Senator REED. At what force level are you planning? The current force levels for 2 years?

Admiral MULLEN. What General Casey has said is, he can basically sustain 15 brigades in CENTCOM. So, let's say 13 in Iraq, 2 in Afghanistan for the foreseeable future at——

Senator REED. Twelve months.

Admiral MULLEN.—a high-risk level specifically, particularly at high risk for the next 2 years. So, sort of, through the end of 2009 and into 2010, until he builds out more brigade combat teams with the Army growth.

Senator REED. Among the consequences of high risk is the lack of any significant Strategic Reserve.

Admiral MULLEN. Certainly front the ground forces——

Senator REED. Ground forces.

Admiral MULLEN.—yes, sir. We wouldn't be put in a much different position than we are right now.

Senator REED. There has been a great deal of discussion about the assumption of financial obligations by the Government of Iraq. Specifically, have they agreed to begin to fund the Concerned Local Citizens (CLCs), or the Sons of Iraq, Sunni components that we have organized in different parts—principally Anbar, but also south of Baghdad, in mixed areas?

Admiral MULLEN. There is a commitment on the part of the Government of Iraq to provide what we're calling Iraqi CERP to $300 million, and they made that a few weeks ago. General Petraeus said recently, they're very close to that money being made available. He also said—I was made aware, within the last few days, that they have an additional commitment in the CERP; I just can't remember what the number is.

Senator REED. But——

Admiral MULLEN. I couldn't tell you, in the CERP category, whether that's going to salaries.

Senator REED. But, as I understand CERP—and my time expired—that is essentially civic-action funds.

Admiral MULLEN. It's both. It's both to pay the Sons of Iraq, as well as to build projects. That's one of the reasons that we—and General Petraeus, in particular—pushed so hard on this, is because he calls it his "ammunition" right now. It's had such a positive impact, in terms of employing people, and providing additional security, and, obviously, providing a salary for an Iraqi family so that they can survive in a meaningful way until we're sort of through this whole transition.

Senator REED. Thank you very much.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Reed.

Senator Sessions.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I thank both of you for your leadership, and from my observations, I think both of you have won the respect of the American people and the commentators, critics even, of our effort, and that speaks well of how you've conducted yourselves and the integrity you've shown.

Secretary Gates, one of the complaints that we had was, "Well, things may be getting better, militarily—violence is down, there's no doubt about that, but there has been no political progress in the country since the last report from General Petraeus and you." But, you note some political progress in your written statement—a pension law, an amnesty law, a provincial powers law, a justice and accountability law—and they passed a 2008 budget. Would you tell us—just give us a rundown of how significant you think those political developments are. What are some of the political challenges that remain?

Secretary GATES. Well, I think that those laws represent, if I'm not mistaken, four of the six benchmark laws that we all talked about last year. One of the interesting aspects is how three of the laws were passed as a package deal in a negotiation within the Council of Representatives. It was actual politics going on, where, "I'll support your bill if you'll support my bill, if you'll support my bill," kind of thing. I think that, again, you've——

Senator SESSIONS. That's never done in Washington. [Laughter.]

Secretary GATES. I think that it has been interesting to watch the reaction of the other politicians, the non-Shiite politicians in Iraq, responding to Maliki's initiative in Basrah, for all of its military shortcomings, because they saw him go after Shiite extremists. He has heard positive things from Sunni leaders, from Kurdish leaders, and so on, and it's still a long path to reconciliation, but I think that there has been real progress, particularly in the last 3 or 4 months, in terms of the political process in Iraq. It's still a long way to go. The challenge is still the suspicion of the Shiite, it is still the feeling of the Shiite—or the Sunnis that—presumably, some residual hope that they could regain power someday. There will be the contest over politics—over elections in the provinces, and those will go well, I think, in those areas that are largely Shiite, Sunni, or Kurdish—it'll get more complicated in the provinces where there's a mixed population this fall. But, I think that they're moving in the direction—I don't know whether they'll make elections in October, but I think that the judgment of our folks in the DOS and the intelligence community is that they'll probably be able to get them done this year, the provincial elections, and then a national election next year.

So, I think everyone has learned lessons from the past, and you heard great caution from General Petraeus and from Ambassador Crocker. I think you will hear caution from us, as well, in terms of expecting too much, too quickly. But, I do think there has been progress.

Senator SESSIONS. Admiral Mullen, one of the things about a withdrawal—and I certainly hope that we can—if we do have this pause—and I'm inclined to take the advice of General Petraeus; I

think his performance and his integrity and responding to our questions, and the success that we've seen, that exceeded my expectations, in the last number of months, makes me feel that we ought to be respectful of his opinion; so, I'm inclined to be supportive of that—but, I do believe plans for continuing the drawdown is important so that our allies and friends in Iraq don't become dependent upon us. But, explain to us, as has been explained to me, both in some of the hearings and privately by generals, how difficult it is when you pull a brigade out of an area. The danger of leaving gaps in your lines, and who's going to fill those responsibilities. Would you give us some appreciation for some of the decision difficulties that our commanders have when they take out a brigade in an area in Iraq?

Admiral MULLEN. General Petraeus frequently talks of "battlefield geometry" as he looks at where he has forces and where he needs to move forces. Clearly he's done that, both in building the surge—now we have three of the surge brigades who have returned home, and the other two will be coming out through the end of July. It is that battlefield geometry, obviously, that he takes into account, in terms of where he's going to put people. That's clearly based on the security requirements that are either right in front of him or that he expects in the future. He's moved forces around very deftly, I believe, to handle this drawdown in a way where he's very comfortable handling the drawdown, and that kind of calculus goes on constantly.

At the same time—and there is, obviously, very focused discussion today on the pause and the consolidation and evaluation and assessment. From my perspective, I think it's also very important to do this continuously, and because it is really conditions-based assessment that is actually going on, has been going on since the surge started to decline, as well as we'll continue, no matter how many troops we have there.

It also takes, depending on whether you're a light brigade or a heavy brigade, literally—and where you are coming from and where you might redeploy to—depending on those factors, 45 to 75 days to move you from where you are in Iraq to, let's say, back home, or vice versa.

So, those are all factors, planning factors that he has to take into consideration as he makes decisions about where he puts his forces.

Senator SESSIONS. Would you tell the American people—what I hear you to be saying is that this is complex and difficult, and you are spending considerable time on it, in planning it so that it goes as effectively as we can make it go.

Admiral MULLEN. General Petraeus is the principal architect of this, as the tactical guy, and he spends, along with his commanders, an extraordinary amount of time doing exactly that.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Sessions.

Senator Bill Nelson.

Senator BILL NELSON. Gentlemen, thank you, as everyone has said here, for your public service.

I want to ask you about Afghanistan. We've recently put more marines in there. My question is—it's my understanding we still have such a paucity of troops, not only our troops, but the entire

NATO force, that, once we clear an area, that we can't hold it. Can you comment to the committee about that?

Secretary GATES. Let me make a brief comment, and then invite Admiral Mullen.

First of all, it depends on the part of the country. In the north, where there is less of a Taliban presence, where there has been less violence, this is not so much of a problem. In the east, where we have had a very successful counterinsurgency, where most of our forces are located, and where we have very effective provincial governors, there we have been able to hold. The principal area of concern has been in the south. I would say that your characterization of not having enough forces to hold areas that we had cleared is an accurate description. I would also say that, countrywide, one of the shortages is for people to train the Afghan army and police.

Admiral MULLEN. I would only echo what the Secretary said in that regard. If you ask the commanders there right now, their number-one requirement is for trainers—the Afghan army and the Afghan police. We've generated—and are doing it very rapidly—an Afghan army. The police are behind that, and that's probably the most critical part of this.

So, one of these two battalions of marines that are going in are specifically going in to train. They leave in 7 months. The fact that the French have now come forward and said they're going to add additional troops will provide capability that we need to address the shortfall that we have, although it won't meet it fully. It is principally in the south right now that we are most concerned, with respect to, certainly, combat, and that's where the Taliban is most dense.

Senator BILL NELSON. Let me ask you about Iraq. We had testimony in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last week from a couple of retired generals—General McCaffrey and Lieutenant General Odom—and General Odom told about how much we are paying Sunnis, basically, to be on our side. He specifically mentioned some kind of council, and that it basically costs us about $250,000 per month for 100-square-kilometer area. Do you know anything about this?

Admiral MULLEN. I didn't see his testimony in—I think he's speaking to the salaries we are paying those in what used to be the CLCs, and now we refer to as the Sons of Iraq, to the tune of about 90,000 Sons of Iraq, who are providing for their own security, who have taken back their villages, their towns; and about 20 percent of them are—we're moving them into the security forces. So, all of that, from my perspective, is a winning strategy, because you take them off the street, they're providing for their own security, they can provide for their family, and, in fact, they're moving into the Iraq security forces. If it is different than that, then I'd have to get back to you, Senator.

Senator BILL NELSON. So, basically, his cut on it was, "Well, we don't own them, we merely rent them," but what you're suggesting is that we're not buying their allegiance, we're buying their assistance.

Admiral MULLEN. I would say there's a mix. When I talk to commanders on the ground out there, there are those that they trust implicitly—vet them very hard—there are those that they trust im-

plicitly, and there are others that they keep their eyes on. So the impact that it's had, in order to local security, has really been extraordinary.

Senator BILL NELSON. Let me ask you about something General McCaffrey said, and I'll quote him, "The U.S. Army is starting to unravel—equipment broken, National Guard is under-resourced, terrible retention problems, severe recruiting problems—the Army is too small." You want to comment on that?

Admiral MULLEN. We're growing the Army to 547,000. The recruiting environment is challenging, although we continue to make the recruiting numbers, and we did so again this month. There are waivers, there are concerns about the waivers that are there, but that's watched very carefully, and their—performance of individuals in the Army who have received waivers is consistent with the rest of the force, best we can tell. We watch the indicators very closely. Clearly, the ground forces in the Army, in particular, are stressed. That's why the 15- to 12-month deployment is so important.

That said, they're resilient, they're performing at an exceptionally high level, they're succeeding now in Iraq. When you visit them, they send you that message. They have a skip in their step, which is very positive, and yet they're looking for some relief. In addition to shorter deployments, they'd like to stay home longer. Their families are pressed very hard.

But, I would not describe it as unraveling. General Casey has talked about this "invisible red line." We're not standing right in front of that invisible red line. It's out there. It's a concern that we all have. So, I would not use that kind of language to describe where we are.

Senator BILL NELSON. Finally, Mr. Secretary, I think what folks like me grapple with is the political reconciliation, as to whether or not it, indeed, is possible. You listed a number of laws that had been passed. I think the true test there is the question of whether or not those laws are being implemented, whether they're being executed. What about an oil law, which is a major one, because that's the divvying up of the resource? Other than what you've pointed out, that they have had some politics and produced some laws, you want to give us any other insight into political reconciliation?

Secretary GATES. My view is that reconciliation in Iraq is the beginning of a process that will go on for a very long time. The enmities are ancient, and had been kept in place, as they were, in many respects, in the old Yugoslavia, by force. Once that force was removed, all of the monsters of the past have, sort of, come back.

I think it has taken longer than any of us would have wanted, but I think we are beginning to see the re-emergence of a sense of Iraqi nationalism, including in the Government of Iraq. I think that is progress.

But for these folks to learn to work together and live together freely and in a democratic society is going to take some real time, and that is not unusual for countries that have the kind of history that Iraq has. I think there has been progress, and I think they are moving in the right direction.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Nelson.

Senator Collins.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you.

Secretary Gates, Chairman Levin raised the issue of the Iraqis taking over more of the expenses associated with the war, an issue that I brought up with General Petraeus earlier this week, and I'm very sympathetic to the points that the chairman made. I want to bring up one particular expense that just floors me that the Iraqis are not covering now, and that is the fuel costs. According to press reports, the Pentagon is paying the Iraqi Government $153 million a month for the fuel that's used at a time when the Iraqis are reaping billions of dollars in unanticipated oil revenues because the price of oil per barrel has doubled. Isn't that an expense that the Iraqis should be covering? Shouldn't they just give us the fuel that we need to operate?

Secretary GATES. First of all, I think the practical aspects are, they cannot give us the fuel, because they have their own shortages of the actual fuel. I think the real question is whether there is the potential for reimbursement or something along those lines. I would be honest with you, I think that it's only been in recent weeks that we've been seeing the kinds of dollars, and projecting out the kinds of dollars, that the Iraqis may be able to accumulate. A certain amount of that, they have to keep in Reserves, under IMF agreements, but the question is—they are making a lot of money, they have a big budget—I mean, if you want a fundamental comparison between Iraq and Afghanistan, it is that Iraq, this year, has a budget of $50 billion and the Afghan Government will have revenues of $675 million.

I think we are all beginning to come to grips with this, and I know the President feels strongly about this. He has weighed in with us, in terms of what we would propose to pay for Iraqi equipment and why we should pay for Iraqi equipment at this point. I think we're just beginning to address some of the issues, in terms of what kinds of expenses the Iraqis ought to start taking over, in addition to their own reconstruction funding.

I would just tell you we are mindful of this, but we are at the beginning of the process of looking at it.

Senator COLLINS. I hope that you'll work with us on this issue. Senator Nelson and I have had many conversations about this. I know the chairman and Senator Graham are interested, as well. I've often thought that if the group of us had succeeded in 2003 that had wanted the reconstruction money for Iraq to be in the form of a loan rather than a grant, that we might have seen far less sabotage of the reconstruction projects if the Iraqis had had personal money, more of a commitment to it. I don't know, we'll never know that. I hope that you will work with us. It's really difficult for Americans, who are struggling with the high cost of energy, to see us paying for fuel costs in a country that has the second largest oil Reserves, and has a budget that was supposed to be $48 billion, but now looks like it is going to have revenues of $60 billion because of the soaring price of oil. So, I think this really is an issue that we need to try to work on and come up with a solution.

I do want to switch to Afghanistan. Your comments—your opening comments about the mistakes in American policy 20 years ago, and that we can't repeat those mistakes in either Iraq or Afghani-

stan, brought to mind the first meeting that I had with President Karzai in 2003. Senator Levin was there, and many of my other colleagues, and I'll never forget it, because we landed at Baghram Air Base, we met with him in an Army tent, and his message to us, even back then, was, "Don't abandon us. Don't make the same mistakes that were made decades ago." That's always stayed with me, and in subsequent visits to Afghanistan, President Karzai has repeated that plea.

That's why I'm concerned about the reports from the Afghanistan Study Group and the Atlantic Council that warned very bluntly that we are underresourcing Afghanistan and that NATO—the Atlantic Council's report goes so far as to say, "Make no mistake, NATO is not winning in Afghanistan." I apologize if you covered this and I missed it while we were voting, but could you give us your best assessment of whether you expect NATO countries, other than ours, to step up to the plate and provide the troops that there's widespread agreement it's necessary. I know you've worked very hard and pressed so hard on that. I know you've gotten grief for that, but I applaud you for that. We do need more troops. I'm really worried that having to send more American troops will make it impossible for us to, in the long-term, sustain the 12-month deployments that all of us are desperate to see us return to.

Secretary GATES. One of my defense minister colleagues accused me of megaphone diplomacy. I think that—two things. First of all, I think that one should not underestimate what happened at Bucharest last week. In 2006, when NATO took on the Afghan challenge, I think a lot of countries really didn't know what they were getting into. I think they thought it was going to be largely peacekeeping, economic reconstruction, and so on. I think that's one of the reasons why they've had political problems at home in trying to justify more forces, or why they have not been willing to do that.

In 2008 at Bucharest, the leaders, knowing what they know now, still unanimously reaffirmed the challenge of Afghanistan as NATO's most important operational activity. So the leaders of all of the NATO countries, basically said, "We have to do this." President Sarkozy, at one point, referred to the importance of winning, and I mention him in particular, because the French made a substantial additional contribution that will be going—Regional Command East—that will allow us, then, to send some additional forces to Regional Command South.

The desire of the commander—it's not a formal requirement at this point—the desire of the commander in Afghanistan to have three additional brigades, in my view, is a requirement that NATO will not meet. I think we will get additional forces from a number of different countries. I think they will have real capabilities. But, I think they will not add up to another 10,000 to 12,000 troops that would be represented by 3 brigades. How much they will contribute, I don't know. It will depend, in part, on election politics.

One of the things that I initiated a year ago was getting NATO to approve a vision—a strategic vision statement of where we want to be in 3 to 5 years in Afghanistan, and what we've accomplished, and why we are there, in terms of the terrorist threat to Europe, that the European governments could then use in their domestic

politics to try and educate their people about why the commitment in Afghanistan is important.

I guess the experienced part of me would say they're probably not going to make significant additional contributions. My hope would be, taking advantage of the Bucharest Declaration and perhaps electoral politics changing in some of the countries, that there could be some significant additional contributions.

I'll just leave it at that.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you very much.

Admiral Mullen, I know you've been very concerned about this, as well, and have pushed very hard for the reduced deployment. I know my time has expired, but I'll be interested in talking to you subsequently about that, as well.

Thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Collins.

Senator Ben Nelson.

Senator BEN NELSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, gentlemen, for your service, and, of course, the men and women in uniform, both at home and abroad, and we appreciate, so much, their service, as well.

Senator Collins, Senator Graham, Senator Bayh, and a whole host of us, have raised the question about making loans or seeking reimbursement for any direct payment for certain things. We are sort of reminiscing about 2003, and regretting that we didn't get that in position back at that time, but the administration balked at it on the basis that it would affect, negatively, our going to the donors conference with other countries. In large part, that so-called donors conference turned out to be a lenders conference, with the exception of our effort.

Is it possible for us to be able to work together with the administration to work out a method of reimbursement? Do you think we could come to an agreement as to the kinds of things that should be reimbursed or should the bill footed by the Iraqi Government, before we even approach the Iraqi Government to obtain their concurrence wherever necessary? If that's the case, where we could work together, do you have an idea of the kinds of things that you could identify for us that might be reimbursable? For example, gasoline, the cost of training. That—in some parts, money has gone from reconstruction into training programs for their security purposes. So, I guess I'm just asking, can you give us some idea of the things you think might be reimbursable or direct payments by the Iraqis, so that they don't come at the expense of the American taxpayer and borrowing from future generations?

Secretary GATES. Senator Nelson, as I indicated to Senator Collins, we've, I think, just really begun—we have focused—as we have begun to look at the sums of money that Iraq is earning from the oil sales, we have, just in recent weeks, been looking at ensuring that the reconstruction funds and the military equipment for them are increasingly and dramatically headed in the direction of them picking up those costs. The subject of their reimbursing us, and of those kinds of things, or areas where they would pay for certain services, has not been broached yet because of this focus on the reconstruction and military equipment and so on. But, based on

this hearing, I'm more than happy to carry the message back to the administration and see if we can have a look at this.

Senator BEN NELSON. I suggested it recently. They're a bit aware of it, because I suggested it to Mr. Hadley, so that it wouldn't be a surprise that I intended to bring this up.

Wouldn't you think it would be a good idea to do it in a comprehensive fashion so we don't do it in piecemeal—in other words, so we could put together a program, certain things that clearly would be a loan, those things that could be reimbursed today, those things that would be loaned for repayment in the future—wouldn't it be a good idea to have it in a comprehensive fashion?

Secretary GATES. Well, I certainly agree that if we're going to go down this path, we ought to look at it comprehensively.

Senator BEN NELSON. With some urgency, because every day that goes by, people pay more at the pump, and the oil was at $1.10, now it's $1.12, maybe spiking up yet today. I hope not, but perhaps. It is a very strong drag, I think, on our economy to see these things occur, and then it's sort of an injury on top of the insult, when we're also paying for services for some other country.

I have another area that I'd like to raise, as well. During testimony yesterday before our committee, I discussed with retired General Jack Keane who's one of the authors of the surge strategy—about language that Senator Collins, I, and others have wanted to get passed, and that is to transition the mission in Iraq out of providing security in Baghdad into providing more combat troops into the north to take out al Qaeda and the insurgency through counterinsurgent methods in the north; and, at that time—we've also proposed, for some time, a stronger emphasis in the south, with the militias and the Mahdi Army and other groups in the south. We've really not received any support from the administration. We've not set a timetable to withdraw. We set a date to start the process, and that would be to start it. Now, based on what I heard General Keane say, and what I'm hearing in the discussions with General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker—is that, in fact, that's what's happening. I guess my question to you is, is that what's happening? Have we begun the transition of the mission from providing, essentially, security for the Government of Iraq in Baghdad to expanding it into these other areas?

Secretary GATES. Let me comment and then invite Admiral Mullen to comment.

I think we began the transition of mission with the withdrawal of the first surge brigade, in December. What is going to happen in Iraq if you're doing this in a color graphic, the country is not going to turn from one color to another color for the whole country. It will be more of a mosaic, with different pieces of it turning at different times. There are already eight provinces under provincial Iraqi control. Anbar will probably go to provincial Iraqi control within a matter of weeks. So, the mission will have transitioned dramatically in those places, to strategic overwatch, where there will be relatively few troops, relatively few coalition troops, and their role will be very different, say, in Anbar, than it was 7 or 8 months ago. It will be——

Senator BEN NELSON. If I might ask you, would that also be, perhaps, the beginning of the establishment of a residual force or a residual mission there, as well?

Secretary GATES. Yes, sir, I think so. There will be places in Iraq where the mission has transitioned from our being in the lead and being in combat to a strategic overwatch, where we have a residual force, to other places in Iraq where we're still engaged in combat, such as in Mosul and places like that. So, I believe we are in the process of a transition of mission, and it is taking place at different times and different places in Iraq.

Admiral MULLEN. In fact, General Petraeus, when he was here in September, was given a mission statement that essentially was directed to generate this kind of transition. That's obviously tied to building the Iraqi security forces. We're up about 20 battalions now from where we were a year ago, in addition I think it's about 107,000 or so that are leading independently or leading with us throughout the country, all of which is part of this transition. There will be places where we can do it and get into an overwatch position very quickly; in others, it's going to take more time.

Senator BEN NELSON. We have stressed, with this legislation, that we always felt that, if it started, the question of "how fast does it go?" depended on conditions on the ground and commanders on the ground and success. So it was passed, even though it wasn't voted on. That might be an unfair way to characterize it, but it does seem that, in effect, that that is now the strategy. I never understood the opposition to our legislation. But, that probably isn't the first, nor will it be the last time, that I don't understand opposition.

Thank you very much for your answers. Appreciate it.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Nelson.

Senator Graham.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The whole premise of the surge was to provide better security and hoping that would lead to better performance by the Iraqi military and a better economy and quicker political reconciliation. In January 2007, the President announced that we were going to change strategy. Admiral Mullen, as I understand the strategy behind the surge, was to add additional combat power to bring a level of security to Iraq that was unknown before January 2007. Is that correct?

Admiral MULLEN. There's actually two things—not just the——

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.

Admiral MULLEN. —additional combat power, but also that provide security for the Iraqi people. Really, it's—

Senator GRAHAM. That's right, to——

Admiral MULLEN. —the counterinsurgency——

Senator GRAHAM. —protect the population.

Admiral MULLEN. —the counterinsurgency approach, which was generated at that time, as well.

Senator GRAHAM. My premise has been that, without better security and better protection and more confidence of the Iraqi people, nothing is going to happen. You had political and economic stagnation before January 2007; you had, basically, Anbar province occupied by elements of al Qaeda; and widespread sectarian violence.

So, the hope would be that, by protecting the Iraqi people, getting out behind the walls, the joint security stations, confidence would be built by the Iraqi people to take more action, to tell us more about the insurgency.

I think, by any objective measure, it's worked, that the military situation in the Anbar situation has dramatically improved, that the biggest success of all, from my point of view, is that the Anbar Iraqis rose up against al Qaeda, aligned themselves with coalition forces, and al Qaeda has taken a very big beating. To me, of all the things that could happen in the war on terror, having Muslims reject al Qaeda, particularly Sunni Muslims, would be a huge sea of change in the war on terror. I just want to compliment you both, and all under your command, for having brought about success that was not known before and has come at a heavy price.

So, now, where to go. The SOFA that is of much discussion. The reason I think we need to deal with that now is, it's my understanding the legal underpinning for our presence in Iraq is based on the U.N. resolution that expires in December. Is that correct?

Secretary GATES. Yes, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. So, come December, the legal authority that we're basing our presence upon in Iraq, dealing with security threats and the ability to be there, goes back to the U.N. resolution. The good news, for me, is that the Iraqi Government is saying, "We want out from Article VII—Chapter VII of the U.N. We want to be seen as a legitimate state, not a chaotic place," and that will require a bilateral negotiation to continue our presence. Is that the game plan, here?

Secretary GATES. Yes, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you know of anyplace in the world where thousands of American troops are stationed in a foreign country without a SOFA or something like it?

Secretary GATES. No.

Senator GRAHAM. As a matter of fact, it would be very irresponsible, wouldn't it, to leave our troops in Iraq or any other country without some law governing their conduct and providing them protections? Is that correct?

Secretary GATES. Exactly.

Admiral MULLEN. Yes, sir.

Secretary GATES. A SOFA is for the protection of our troops. It's the ground rules under which they are in another country.

Senator GRAHAM. Having been a military lawyer for 25 years, I appreciate how important that is, because when a soldier, airman, sailor, or marine may be caught by the host nation police forces, sometimes, we don't want our folks to go into that legal system, and I would argue that maybe this is an occasion where we would want to retain jurisdiction over any offenses committed in Iraq.

So, there is an effort to negotiate a bilateral agreement, a traditional SOFA, with the Iraqi Government. Is that correct?

Secretary GATES. Yes, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. I would urge you to get that done, sooner rather than later, because the next President, whoever he or she may be, is not coming into office until January, and there's a legal noman's land beginning in December. So, I hope we can do that, and

certainly not make it a treaty that needs to be ratified, and standard SOFAs are not.

Now, about Iran—let's think of Iraq a little more strategically. Iran seems to me to be hell-bent on requiring nuclear capability, that they are not producing power—nuclear power for peaceful purposes, or at least I don't believe they are; I don't trust them when they say they are. What would be the effect of a nuclear armed Iran to the region, in your opinion, Admiral Mullen and Secretary Gates? How would it change the balance of power?

Admiral MULLEN. I think it would have a dramatic effect on the region. I worry a great deal about it generating concerns in other countries, who then would think they'd have to have the same capability. Clearly, that kind of capability puts Israel potentially under the envelope, which is——

Senator GRAHAM. Is it your understanding that the Iranian nuclear desires could eventually lead to a nuclear weapon? Or what are their motives? What do you think they're up to, when it comes to a nuclear program?

Admiral MULLEN. Oh, I believe they're still trying to develop a nuclear weapon.

Senator GRAHAM. What about you, Secretary Gates?

Secretary GATES. I think they're determined to get nuclear weapons.

Senator GRAHAM. How much time do we have before they get there? Does anybody really know?

Secretary GATES. No. You have estimates, and the estimates range from, the worst case, sometime maybe late next year, to——

Admiral MULLEN. 2009.

Secretary GATES. —out several years.

Senator GRAHAM. Israel is a very valuable ally. Is it fair to say that some of the attacks that are being generated from the Gaza Strip, in terms of rockets coming into Israel, the weaponry is coming from Iran? Are you familiar with that?

Admiral MULLEN. I would go so far as to say that certainly Iranian support for Hamas is there.

Senator GRAHAM. So, Iranian support for Hamas is there. It's clear that the "special groups" that are operating in Iraq have Iranian ties. Is that correct?

Admiral MULLEN. Yes, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. General Petraeus's testimony was pretty stunning to me, in the sense that he said, "Now it's not al Qaeda, it's not sectarian violence that's the biggest threat to a peaceful, stable Iraq, but Iranian influence." Is that a fair statement, Admiral Mullen?

Admiral MULLEN. Yes, sir, I think it is.

Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Gates, do you agree with that?

Secretary GATES. Yes, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. Some people have said we've taken our eye off the ball when it comes to al Qaeda by being in Iraq. What would be the consequence to the war on terror, in general, if al Qaeda would have been seen to have lost in Iraq because Sunnis in Iraq turned on them? Would that have a benefit throughout the world, in terms of our struggle with al Qaeda?

Secretary GATES. My opinion is, given the level of investment—in fact, as the President said this morning, given the level of effort and investment that al Qaeda made in Iraq, and where they were, 15–18 months ago, in Anbar, it would be seen, I think, throughout the region, as a major setback.

Senator GRAHAM. Has anyone suggested to you that we should take troops out of Iraq and send them to Waziristan? No?

Admiral MULLEN. No, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.

Final question. What intrigued me about the comment about the budgets of Afghanistan and Iraq is that it—did you say it was $675 million for all of Afghanistan?

Secretary GATES. Yes, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. Has anybody gone to the Iraqis and asked them, "there's another nation out there struggling, trying to regain their freedom. Would you contribute some money to the Afghan people?" I mean, if they have $60 billion, and they've budgeted for $48 billion—I've never thought about that, until you mentioned it, but if you get a chance to talk to the Iraqis, this may be a chance to demonstrate to the world that they're going to be a team player, here.

So, with that thought in mind, thank you for your service.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Graham.

Senator Cornyn.

Senator CORNYN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Gates, Admiral Mullen, I'm not going to ask you about Iraq or Afghanistan. I'd like to stick a little closer to home and talk about our hemisphere; and specifically, Latin America. I come from a State with a 1,600-mile common border with Mexico, a place that, but for the grace of God, may have been governed by somebody unfriendly to the United States, Lopez Obrador, if he had won and beat President Calderon. President Calderon, of course, has been a good ally and worked with us; and, particularly, we've helped him fight the narcotraffickers in his own country. But, it's still a lot of violence, and it's a big challenge.

Going a little farther south, we have another tremendous ally named Colombia. Recently, I had a chance to visit with Admiral James Stavridis, head of Southern Command—about current developments and challenges our Nation faces in his area of responsibility, which includes Latin America. I've read that our policy—our official or national policy toward Latin America has been described as one of benign neglect. I prefer to think that it was more unintentional, because of our concentration in other parts of the world. But, the Admiral made it clear to me that there's a real threat of the spread of terrorism in Latin America. Of course, President Uribe, in Colombia, is fighting the Revoluntionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), which has found safe haven and support in places like Hugo Chavez's Venezuela and elsewhere.

Unfortunately, today we have the news that the House of Representatives—and this is not your bailiwick, necessarily, but the House of Representatives has changed its rules and prevented us from acting on the Colombian-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. My question is not so much about trade, but about our national security.

I would just ask both of you, if the United States were to turn its back on Colombia, how would this impact our national security?

Secretary GATES. Senator, a week or 10 days ago, I published an op-ed on the national security implications of our relationship with Colombia and of the trade agreement, and I'd be happy to get you a copy of that. It clearly focuses on where we were in Colombia 10 years ago.

I will tell you, one of the biggest changes in the time since I retired from the government and came back has been what has happened in Colombia. What troubles me is that there was recognition of Colombia's importance to our security, on a bipartisan basis, beginning in the Clinton administration with Plan Colombia, that has invested something like $5 billion of American money in Colombia for their security, for their police, for counternarcotics, for counterterrorism, and so on. We have seen a real success in Colombia in all of these ways. We have seen the kinds of connections that the FARC has with neighboring countries. So I believe that Colombian security is very important, and it would be a shame to see the progress that's been made there put at risk because they face economic difficulties or because President Uribe suffers political consequences because his good friend the United States of America basically turned its back on him.

Senator CORNYN. Admiral Mullen?

Admiral MULLEN. Senator, I visited Colombia 2 months ago, I think, and, while I was aware from a distance how much better their security had gotten, it was really an incredible experience to go through it with their military and to see exactly what they had, which has in effect, become a counterinsurgency force, expanded in size, and taken back their own country, about 30 percent of which—I'm sure you know this—the local mayors, in 2002, didn't live anywhere close to the towns they were mayors at; they are now all living in their towns. I give the Colombia leadership, President Uribe, as well as the Colombian military, great credit for doing this.

They are a good friend of ours, and I do worry, and have historically worried, about how well we look to the south. This is just my own experience. I'm not sure benign neglect is the right answer, but clearly Latin America is an important part of the world for us. They are our neighbors, and clearly there are growing challenges down there, not just from the narco piece, but potentially becoming narcoterrorism—and the leadership, which is clearly not supportive in other countries—is not supportive of where we're headed.

So, we need Colombia, certainly from a military standpoint, to be a strong ally. They've made incredible progress, and I would hate to see the kind of investment that we've made be jeopardized, based on other issues which are clearly in play.

Senator CORNYN. I think it's not a coincidence that we've seen countries like China and Iran interested in South America and Latin America, generally. Of course, if my memory serves me, I believe there has been some developments about weapons production down in Venezuela. If I'm not mistaken, involving Kalashnikov rifles, and sales of military materiel to Venezuela by other countries.

I would just hope that the memory of President Ahmadinejad, of Iran, a state sponsor of international terrorism, touring Latin

America, strengthening their ties with the likes of Hugo Chavez and leaders of the terrorist group FARC, would cause us to wake up—and I'm not talking about you, I'm talking about Congress—to wake up and realize the importance, not only of our economic ties, but the importance of our national security ties to a country like Colombia.

I would just think that the only person who is celebrating the killing of the Colombia Free Trade Agreement today, at least until after November, is probably Castro, Chavez and all of our enemies in that part of the world. They're, in effect, telling President Uribe, "This is what you get for being a friend and ally of the United States." Not a message we want to send, and one that's not consistent with our national security interests.

My time's expired. Thank you.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Cornyn.

Senator Akaka.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Secretary and Admiral, for being so patient today.

Admiral Mullen, a recent estimate by the Congressional Budget Office puts the projected cost of future operations in the global war on terrorism between $440 billion and $1 trillion over the next 10 years. The lower figure is based on an assumption of 30,000 troops deployed to both Iraq and Afghanistan by 2010, a significant reduction from the approximately 200,000 currently engaged, an increasingly unlikely goal.

Admiral Mullen, if realized, what impact will these expenditures have on the ability of the services to transform and modernize over the next decade so that they can effectively meet 21st-century challenges, especially with regards to future combat systems and the Air Force and Navy fleets.

Admiral MULLEN. Senator, that obviously is tied very clearly to what the defense budget is over time. Over that same period of time, we're challenged in managing the funds that we have, with buying what we need for the future, operating today in operations just as you've described, as well as resourcing the people who really make all this possible. That tension is clearly there in a timeframe. If our defense budget went down fairly dramatically, then those operations were still ongoing—there's only one place to get those kinds of resources, and that pretty significantly takes it out of future development or reduce the number of people. Most of us believe, right now, that probably wouldn't be a prudent move. We're living in a very dangerous, unpredictable, uncertain world, and having the right resources to support the men and women who carry out these missions is absolutely vital. So, it could put a great deal of pressure on our future accounts, certainly our acquisition accounts, based on the size of the operation in an extended period of time.

That said, that kind of projection, in terms of operational level, long-term, most of the analysis that we've done in the DOD look at some level of operations out there in a time of what we call persistent conflict. In the world we're living in, one of my biggest concerns is that we figure out a way to resource that correctly.

Senator AKAKA. Mr. Secretary and Admiral Mullen, the absence of attacks within Iraq is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for stability. Dr. Stephen Biddle, who testified only last week, says that much of the reduced level of violence is due to Iraq's becoming—and I'm quoting—"a patchwork of self-defending sectarian enclaves that warily observe each other." Even if a situation of reduced attacks is maintained by these regional cease-fires, the underlying problems of political and ethnic fracturing would still exist. These so-called cracks in the foundation of the new Iraq represent the absence of the political reconciliation that the surge was supposed to be able to help provide.

My question to you, Secretary Gates and Admiral Mullen, what are the long-term implications for the U.S. military presence in Iraq if the Maliki government is unable to achieve a degree of reconciliation that will convince the warring factions to lay down their arms?

Secretary GATES. Senator, first of all, I believe there has been some real political progress in Iraq with the passage of four of the six pieces of benchmark legislation. They are distributing the revenues of the oil—even though there isn't a hydrocarbon law, they are distributing them according to, basically, the percentages that would be in the law. I think that, as I mentioned earlier, we have seen Maliki take action in Basrah against Shiite who were influenced by Iran, probably supported by Iran in many respects, and try to establish the authority of the national government down there. He's been congratulated on this by the Sunni leadership, by the Kurdish leadership, and so on.

They're not one big happy family, and they won't be for a long time, but I think there is progress in this respect. In some regards, I would say that oil will be the glue that holds Iraq together and provides the motive for everybody, no matter how hard things get from time to time, to ultimately work out their problems. I think they've made some headway on that. I believe that they will—I think it'll be a mixed record, but, I think, on the whole, it is moving forward—more slowly than we would like, but moving forward.

Admiral?

Admiral MULLEN. The only thing I'd like to add to that, Senator, is we oftentimes focus on the national-level political reconciliation, which is a very important part, but there's been considerable progress in reconciliation at the provincial level, as well as at the local level. When I, again, visit our Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT), our commanders on the ground, they speak to a lot of progress, and it varies, depending on where you are in the country. But, the kind of movement among the Iraqi people from the local-politics standpoint, that just wasn't there a year ago. Also, provinces starting to connect with Baghdad, and Baghdad starting to connect with them, all of which is part of this, needs to move more quickly, but, like in many other things, I think, a year ago I would not have predicted it would have even gone this far.

Senator AKAKA. Admiral, one of the security successes over the past 6 months has been the Sunni Awakening Movement in Anbar province, where former Sunni insurgents have turned on their former al Qaeda allies in order to bring stability back to their local

neighborhoods. This practice has started spreading to other provinces, and now even includes some Shiite groups.

However, there is now a growing concern over what may become the focus for those battle-hardened militia groups in the years to come, much like the Mujahedin soldiers the U.S. aided in Afghanistan in the 1980s against the Soviets and eventually developed into elements of the Taliban. My question to you, is there a concern that these groups will ultimately make it even more difficult for the central Iraqi Government to establish and maintain effective control over the provinces, especially given the sectarian conflicts which we are witnessing now?

Admiral MULLEN. Certainly I think there is a concern along those lines, but it is not something that the commanders on the ground have spoken to as something they see in the immediate future with respect to those who are now working with us. I think the long-term outcome here is going to be tied to success in the country. Can the country come up in a way to provide the kind of overall economy and security, the big things we've talked about before, and, in fact, think of Iraq first, as opposed to the sectarian aspects of this, thinking that way? We're moving in that direction, but it is painfully slow, and it's just going to take some time to do that. The CLCs, 90,000 or so, 20 percent of which are Shiite, and about 20 percent of that overall force is also joining the security forces. So, this is all moving in the right direction.

Can we sustain it? I think that's the question that's out there. There's the feeling that there's a willingness to do this, but it's the entirety of the country that has to come to bear on this across all aspects of economy and politics, as well as security, which provide for a better country and a better outcome for all of the Iraqis.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Akaka.

Senator Thune.

Senator THUNE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Gates, Admiral Mullen, thank you very much for your presence here today and for your service to our country, and thank you for your patience. I think you're at the end of the line, here.

Admiral Mullen, last week the Readiness and Management Support Subcommittee received testimony from the Service Vice Chiefs on the current readiness of our forces. During that readiness hearing, I asked the Vice Chiefs about the impact on each Service that may occur from the delay on the passage of the second part of the fiscal year 2008 supplemental appropriations request. General Magnus, the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, said that the delays in funding, "send a strong, unmistakable signal to our seasoned warriors who have been willing—and their families have been willing to sign them up to re-enlist." Then he went on to say, "that whenever we see a significant delay in deliberations regarding appropriations to support the pay for our armories—and I'm sure it's the same for the other Services—you have a very intelligent, very professional force, and they also pause to be able to see what this means for them and their future."

Admiral, would you agree with General Magnus's assessment of the messages that these delays in funding send to our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan?

Admiral MULLEN. In my opening comments, I talked about the support that this committee and Congress has had for our men and women in uniform, and it's been extraordinary, and we couldn't be the military that we are without that.

That said, this specific issue of the remaining supplemental for this year starts to be seen—send the kind of signals that you've described, or that General Magnus describe. It also impacts the institution in a way that the institution starts to react earlier than even the time that we figure we're going to run out of money. So, the discussion now gets centered on—that we potentially could run out of money to pay the Army as early as June, and there—the institution starts to get poised for that, and the people start—certainly the troops start to worry whether that's going to happen.

So I would ask the committee and Congress to pass this as rapidly as possible, because it does have those kinds of effects. Clearly, it then has a rolling effect, if it didn't—if funding didn't get out there—into our readiness—very seriously, our readiness for the rest of this year.

Senator THUNE. General Cody also—the Army Vice Chief—testified about the delay of emergency war supplemental funding and its effects on equipment readiness. He said that these delays have a "cascading impact on readiness over time." Could you talk a little bit about the impacts of delayed funding on the equipment readiness in theater?

Admiral MULLEN. Clearly, we've brought equipment back from theater to run through the depots to repair it. The funds that are spoken to in this bill are those kinds of funds, and that does have a cascading and cumulative effect that would, in fact, impact our ability to be ready to go do what we need to do in theater, and to refurbish it in order to continue to support what we're doing.

Senator THUNE. This would be for Secretary Gates or for you, Admiral—but, at a committee hearing last week, again, General Cody, the Army Vice Chief, testified that the Army is out of balance, and that the current demand for our forces in Iraq and Afghanistan exceed the sustainable supply and limits our ability to provide ready forces for other contingencies. We've heard similar statements that have been made, expressed by the Army Chief of Staff, General Casey. At the same time, Congress has been very supportive of initiatives that have been proposed by the Department to increase the number of ground forces, to accelerate the purchase of new equipment, provide recruiting and enlistment incentives, and to support the investment required to transform the Army into modular brigades. In addition, the President announced, this morning, that the Army plans to reduce deployment times in Iraq from 15 months to 12 months.

All of these fixes are intended to relieve the stress and the strain of the current operations tempo for the Army's ground forces. I guess my question is, In your opinion, does the Army have the remedies in place to improve their readiness while continuing to meet security requirements in Iraq and Afghanistan? If not, what more can be done to help the Army get themselves back in balance?

Admiral MULLEN. The "grow the force" initiative is incredibly important, and yet, we're still 2 or 3 years out from when we complete that.

When General Casey speaks of the Army being out of balance, he focuses on the training that we're going through now, and then the missions we're executing, which principally focuses on counterinsurgency. So, there's a full-spectrum aspect of this which we're not able to do right now, in the Army or the Marine Corps, because we're focused here. General Conway would tell you he is not able to do any expeditionary amphibious operations, both training—because of where he's focused right now—and in that regard, out of balance, that the Army—the ground forces—and we do focus on the Army, and these 15- to 12-month deployments are specifically Active-Duty Army. But, we shouldn't forget the pressure that the Marine Corps is under. They've been in a one-to-one dwell, 7 months gone and 7 months back, for a significant period of time, as well. That pressure is on those forces, and it's going to take, actually, both a "build the force" and a combination of that and reducing the amount of forces that are deployed, to start to build more dwell time, which is the next big step, so forces can go out for a year and come back for up to 2 years; clearly, the funding to refurbish the equipment and also the time, if I were back 2 years, to do some of this additional training.

The other thing is, the Army, in particular, has modularized at an—when you consider what we're doing in war, they have modularized at an incredibly fast rate—and I really applaud that—to meet the needs for the future.

So, we're in a very delicate place right now, for all these things, and it's the force requirements that are generating a lot of this, and until we get some relief there—that would be the next big step.

Secretary GATES. Let me add one thing to that, Senator.

I think one of the biggest differences between a conscription Army and an All-Volunteer Force is the attention that we need to pay to families. The family has become incredibly important in the success of the All-Volunteer Army. We hope to have, up here fairly soon, some initiatives that address the family needs and send messages—more messages to the families about their importance. This will include requests for accelerated construction of daycare centers and longer hours for daycare centers, and hiring preferences for—in the whole Federal Government, for the spouses of our men and women in uniform, and some—potentially, the sharing of unused benefits and so on. So, we hope that Congress will take a close look at those. Congress has always been supportive of these kinds of initiatives, but paying attention to the family needs is really going to be important and has been, and will continue to be.

Senator THUNE. We would welcome suggestions that you have about that, and look forward to working with you when you are prepared to submit those to us.

So, thank you all very much, again, for your service.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Thune.

Thank you both. It's been a long afternoon, and very uneven, in terms of schedule and calendar, but that's the U.S. Senate. You've been very understanding.

Admiral?

Admiral MULLEN. Mr. Chairman, just in the hopes that I could eliminate additional administrative requirements, your specific question about Maliki's ban really was focused on JAM, and there actually are other efforts for other militias that people are trying to—that are—there are significant efforts to try to make them go away, not successful, as you——

Chairman LEVIN. Well, if you look at the—I think it's called the Council of—if you look at the Iraqi—I think it's called Presidency Council, but I'm not sure——

Admiral MULLEN. Right.

Chairman LEVIN. —their—and it may have been their security advisor—National Security Council—their statement was "all militias." There's a huge difference.

Admiral MULLEN. Right.

Chairman LEVIN. It's just not going after his own—Maliki's only going after the Sadr militia, and leaving out his own. Number one, he's not being consistent with the constitution. Number two, he's sending exactly the wrong message, I think, in terms of even enforcement of the effort to stop all militias. Remember, the benchmark is aimed at a law to prohibit all militias. Maliki's taken it onto himself a statement that, unless certain militia is disbanded, apparently leaving out the others, that they will not have an opportunity to participate in the October 1 elections. I'm not sure where he got that from.

Could you do this, Admiral? Would you—this is really a suggestion for you, Mr. Secretary, not for the Admiral—could you double check that with our ambassador and see whether or not that reflects our policy and whether it reflects the Iraqi constitution? "That" being to just single out one militia for the prohibition. If it is the Maliki position, and if it doesn't reflect our policy—and I don't think it does—or their constitution—and I don't think it does—could you then express your own opinion, whatever it might be, to our ambassador?

Secretary GATES. Sure, and we'll start with making sure of what Maliki actually said.

[The information referred to follows:]

There is no conflicting policy on Prime Minister Maliki's part regarding the prohibition of militias in Iraq. The Prime Minister has indicated on a number of occasions that he is against militias and has ordered their disbandment as a threat to national sovereignty. Illegal militias that have refused to disband are being routinely targeted by Iraqi security forces for destruction. The Prime Minister has taken a less combative approach with members of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) than he has taken with the Sadrist Trend, whose members remain with active ties to Sadrist militias. This circumstance stems from the Sadrist group's reticence to disarm until confronted, as during recent security operations in Basrah in April 2008; however, the former military wing of ISCI, the Badr Brigade militia, disarmed in 2003 following the liberation of Iraq.

- Since its founding in 1982, ISCI has been a political force in Iraq. During its years in exile, ISCI became an important political voice for the exiled Iraqi community. Since the liberation of Iraq in 2003, ISCI has been influential within the Iraqi Government, most notably within the Ministry of Interior, and to a lesser extent, the other segments of the Iraqi security forces.
- Also in 2003, ISCI and the Badr leadership chose to recognize Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) Order Number 91 that requires all illegal militias to disband. The Government of Iraq supports this disarming and is thus synchronized with U.S. policy goals to disarm illegal militias. This order not only requires disbandment of illegal militias but, under certain circumstances, precludes former

militia members from holding political office for a period of 3 years. CPA Order Number 91 directs:

- "A member of an Illegal Armed Force or Militia may not hold political office at any level. An individual determined to have been a member of an Illegal Armed Force or Militia shall be barred from holding political office at any level for a period of 3 years from the date such individual ceased to be a member of an Illegal Armed Force or Militia."

In a USA Today October 2006 interview, Prime Minister Maliki stated:

- "We started to deal with militias since the first day I took over as prime minister. I declared from that day one of my goals was to dissolve the militias. I believe there could be no true state while armed militias are operating."
- "This conviction has not changed, whether the militia is Shiite, Sunni, Arabic, or Kurdish. The problem is the same. The problem that we face in disbanding militias—and the militias have to be disbanded—is that there are procedures, steps that need to be taken, which take time. We have taken some important steps toward that end."

In April 2008, following Iraqi security force operations in Basrah, Prime Minister Maliki said:

- "The first step will be adding language to a draft election bill banning parties that operate militias from fielding candidates in provincial balloting this fall. The government intends to send the draft to parliament within days and hopes to win approval within weeks."

Prime Minister Maliki, in an interview with CNN on April 7, 2008, also said:

- "Solving the problem comes in no other way than dissolving the Mahdi Army. They no longer have a right to participate in the political process or take part in the upcoming elections unless they end the Mahdi Army."

The United States supports Prime Minister Maliki's approach and shares the vision for an Iraq that is free of the violence of militia groups and other violent elements. U.S. policy is clear: the Iraqi people have a constitutional right to "participate in public affairs and to enjoy political rights including the right to vote, elect, and run for office." However, militias and other violent groups cannot be members of the same democratic institutions that they work to undermine by using violence to kill and intimidate the people.

In April 2008 Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said:

- "First of all, I didn't hear anybody say that the Sadrist trend, which is—you know, was elected, shouldn't try again to get the votes of the Iraqi people, as long as they're prepared to do it not armed. That was—that militias need to break up. Eventually, all armed force has to be under the state, and that's true for any society, any democratic society.

Also in April 2008 U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker said:

- "Iraq is at the point in its development where the events of Basrah and Baghdad are the state asserting its authority against an extralegal or illegal militia. That's certainly how Iraqis broadly are viewing this, and in that sense, it is a defining event. The politics of Iraq will go on. The competition between the Supreme Council and Dawa and the Sadr trend and Fadhila just to name a few on the Shia side, that's going to be part of the political landscape and that's what elections are all about.

U.S. policy toward the uniform elimination of militias in Iraq is synchronized with Iraqi policy regarding the elimination of these same militias. Prime Minister Maliki's initiative in removing the threat of all militia activity from Iraq does not appear to show evidence of favoritism toward any one militia group. We will continue to support the efforts of the Government of Iraq to quickly and lawfully remove militias from Iraq.

Chairman LEVIN. We thank you both. It's been a very important hearing for us. Thank you.

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR CARL LEVIN

RISK ASSESSMENT

1. Senator LEVIN. Admiral Mullen, Vice Chief of Staff of the Army General Cody, in testimony before the Readiness and Management Support Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee on April 1, stated "Our readiness, quite frankly,

is being consumed as fast as we can build it" and "I've never seen our lack of strategic depth be at where it is today."

At the same hearing, Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps General Magnus stated "The short dwell time at home does not allow our units the time to train on the full spectrum missions needed to be ready for other contingencies" and "the readiness of the nondeploying units has been at a significantly lower level than the forward deployed forces."

How would you assess the risk if another contingency, such as conflict on the Korean peninsula, arose while U.S. forces remain engaged in Iraq and Afghanistan?

Admiral MULLEN. [Deleted.]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MARK PRYOR

SHIITE CLERIC MUQTADA AL-SADR

2. Senator PRYOR. Secretary Gates, I asked Ambassador Crocker if radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr is trying to set himself up as an Ayatollah in Iraq. An article in the USA Today on April 10, states that "the recent spike in violence here has shown that the enigmatic Shiite cleric and his Mahdi Army militia continue to have the muscle to plunge Iraq into warfare and essentially reverse recent security gains made by the United States military that the Bush administration cites as a key sign of progress. Or as he did in August, al-Sadr can stop much for the bloodshed by ordering a ceasefire—and win some credit from the United States military for the resulting calm." What are we doing to help the Iraqi Government deal with cleric Muqtada al-Sadr?

Dr. GATES. We continue to work with the Government of Iraq (GOI) to protect the population, build the capability of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISFs), and support job training programs. We are also encouraging and assisting the GOI to provide essential services to the population to diminish the appeal of extremist and militia movements by promoting confidence in the Iraqi Government. These efforts have contributed to a reduction in insurgent and militia activity. We strongly support efforts by the GOI to bring Sadrist elements into the Iraqi Government and ISFs. At the same time, we continue to target criminal militia elements and Iranian supported Special Groups. The GOI has recently taken a more aggressive posture against criminal militia elements, and we will continue to work closely to support Prime Minister Maliki's efforts in that regard.

3. Senator PRYOR. Secretary Gates, are we working on developing a plan or strategy to get him to stand down and disarm his militia?

Dr. GATES. We continue to work with the GOI to protect the population, build the capability of the ISFs, and support job training programs. These efforts have contributed to a reduction in insurgent and militia activity. We strongly support efforts by the GOI to bring Sadrist elements into the Government and ISFs. At the same time, we continue to target criminal militia elements and Iranian supported Special Groups. The GOI has recently taken a more aggressive posture against criminal militia elements, calling for all political groups to disband armed militias. We will continue to work closely to support Prime Minister Maliki's efforts in that regard.

4. Senator PRYOR. Secretary Gates, does the U.S. military have a strategy if he does not stand down or disarm and re-engages with American troops on the streets of Iraq?

Dr. GATES. We retain the ability to engage any militia elements that take up arms against us or the GOI.

5. Senator PRYOR. Secretary Gates, concerning the decreased level of violence in Iraq, is this a true indication of success in Iraq or is this simply Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr issuing an order to his militia to cease fire which he can reverse at any moment?

Dr. GATES. The decrease in violence is an important indicator of progress in Iraq. Muqtada al-Sadr's cease fire order is just one factor in decreasing violence levels. Other factors include our effort to focus on protecting the population, sustained counterinsurgency operations by Iraqi and coalition forces, the increased capability of the ISFs, and Iraqi citizens such as the Sons of Iraq turning against al Qaeda and helping secure their own neigborhoods. Continued Iraqi and coalition pressure on extremists, terrorists, criminals, and other armed groups, along with numerous blows to al Qaeda in Iraq's (AQI) leadership and networks, have diminished enemy capability to conduct attacks.

OPERATIONS IN IRAQ

6. Senator PRYOR. Secretary Gates, in response to Senator Collins' questions on April 9, 2008, at a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing about the progress made by the GOI in meeting benchmarks, retired Army General John M. Keane testified that "we may not resume reductions in 2008" pending three significant events that need to take place: (1) fend off al Qaeda in Mosul; (2) stabilize the operation in the South of Iraq; and (3) fall election in Iraq which will be the watershed political effort in Iraq. What is your assessment of these ongoing and upcoming events?

Dr. GATES. Operations in Mosul against al Qaeda are part of the ongoing effort to destroy its network and deny al Qaeda sanctuary in Iraq. Coalition forces are partnering with Iraqi Army and police units in Ninewa province to accomplish this mission. Prime Minister Maliki directed the establishment of the Ninewa Operations Center and directed additional reinforcements to Mosul to bolster the existing Iraq Security Forces presence there. The provinces in southern Iraq are under Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC). Therefore, the ISF are leading efforts against criminal militias, with Coalition enabler support. The fall provincial elections will be a significant event in Iraq's transition to a fully sovereign and democratic nation and are likely to promote increased reconciliation as communities who boycotted previous elections participate in the political process and gain increased representation in their government. General Petraeus will factor these events and others into his recommendation following the 45-day period of consolidation and evaluation upon the withdrawal the of the last surge brigades in July 2008.

7. Senator PRYOR. Secretary Gates, do you tie these successes/failures to the 45-day period of consolidation and evaluation and then assessment linked to the withdrawal of troops?

Dr. GATES. At this point it is difficult to know what impact, if any, the reduction in surge forces will have on the security situation. A brief pause for consolidation and evaluation following a return to pre-surge troop levels will allow us to analyze the process and its effects in a comprehensive way. I do not anticipate this period of review will be an extended one, and I would emphasize that the hope, depending on conditions on the ground, is to reduce our presence further this fall. But we must be realistic. Conditions in Iraq remain the measure on which we will base our troop strength decisions, and doing that requires sober and realistic assessments of the effects our return to pre-surge levels have on those conditions. The security situation in Iraq remains fragile and gains can be reversed.

READINESS TO RESPOND TO WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION ATTACKS

8. Senator PRYOR. Admiral Mullen, the Commission on the National Guard and Reserve issued its final report on January 31 and cited substantial shortcomings in the Nation's readiness to respond to weapons of mass destruction attacks. Do you agree with the Commission's assessment?

Admiral MULLEN. The Commission did a very thorough job looking at the WMD consequence management problem from a view focused on the National Guard operating under title 32 and the Reserves under title 10 authorities. The Department views our role in a more holistic manner, covering not only the consequence management aspect but the nonproliferation and counter proliferation elements of the national strategy. We consider the Active and Reserve components as integral to the Department's capacity to respond in accordance with the overall Federal strategy.

Essential to DOD's role is interdicting WMD prior to arrival in the homeland. To that end, DOD participates in numerous interagency venues to identify, track, and interdict movement of WMD and suspect shipments from state and non-state proliferators. We have already met with success in several areas, creating obstacles for would be WMD-capable actors from gaining access to these materials.

To be sure, the most costly and difficult aspect of the national strategy is how to respond in a post-detonation environment. There is a three-phased response. The first response phase is executed routinely at the state and local level with the National Guard WMD Civil Support Team (CST), which was directed by congress almost 10 years ago. These teams have progressively grown to number 55, with at least one team resident in each state. The teams routinely respond to local level alarms and will likely provide the first confirmation that an attack has occurred. The second response phase is executed with National Guard Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosives (CBRNE) Enhanced Response Force Packages (CERFP), also directed and funded by congress. There are 12 validated CERFPs with 5 more in various states of sourcing and validation. These units are roughly 150 members strong, and have response capabilities that compliment the detection

and assessment capabilities resident with the first on-scene elements. CERFPs provide immediate but limited duration capability in decontamination, specialized medical, technical extraction, and command and control. The CERFPs were developed along the model of the Marine Corps' Chemical Biological Incident Response Force (CBIRF), which was a key element during the response to Anthrax attacks on the U.S. Senate. The size of the crisis will dictate the level of response, therefore to address our third response phase, I directed the assignment of the CBRNE Consequence Management Response Force (CCMRF) to USNORTHCOM. This 5000-person organization is built around an Army Brigade Combat Team (BCT) and deploys with self contained and supporting communications, medical, transportation, decontamination, logistical, rotary-wing aviation, and unique WMD response units. The Department is working to incrementally allocate forces to provide additional capabilities in the event of multiple events.

As I previously stated, our consequence management response strategy is built on a combined NG, Reserve component, and Active Duty solution. The initial elements are predominantly NG (CST, CERFP), with follow-on forces provided from the Active Duty or Federalized Reserves. Time is a tyrant and the challenge of moving individual units across the country is exacerbated considering time to muster and traditional methods and policies for mobilization. As you are well aware the Department does not have uncommitted brigades for this mission set, so I have directed the JS, Services, and JFCOM to develop Reserve component sourcing solutions. This effort is ongoing with steady progress.

The Department has worked to synchronize our response to support the Federal lead agency, which in most cases is the Department of Homeland Security. DOD elements reside with FEMA Regional offices and are incorporated in their response architecture. This effort has vastly improved our response coordination as evident in natural disaster scenarios, most recently the CA Wildfires. We also train along side our interagency partners. In May we exercised a broad series of responses in the National Level Exercise, and USNORTHCOM conducts similar training events twice a year, normally in the spring and the fall.

9. Senator PRYOR. Admiral Mullen, what actions do you believe are needed to improve the Department of Defense's (DOD) capabilities in this area?

Admiral MULLEN. To continue our efforts in improving DOD's capabilities to respond to WMD attacks, the Department follows a construct based on deliberate planning, coordination activities, operations, and capabilities development detailed in the National Military Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction (NMS–CWMD). This military strategy complements the three pillars of counterpoliferation, nonproliferation, and consequence management set forth in the National Strategy to Combat WMD.

The Department is taking aggressive actions to specifically address: protecting the force, improving response capabilities to support homeland defense and civil support consequence management, and building partnership capacity. The Joint Staff is currently conducting a CWMD Strategic Global Assessment that will address the combatant commanders' ability to execute the strategy outlined within the NMS–CWMD. This assessment will be used to adjust planning and influence future CWMD capability development.

Protecting the Force:

The Department's Chemical and Biological Defense Program (CBDP) is modernizing the joint force by developing and fielding integrated and interoperable capabilities to the joint force. Modernization of Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) defense capabilities will continue to enable the warfighting combatant commands to accomplish all of the CBRN components of the NMS CWMD. The CBDP addresses key doctrine, organization, training, material, leadership and education, personnel and facilities (DOTMLPF) modernization needs described in the capabilities-based assessments conducted for passive defense, consequence management, WMD interdiction, and WMD elimination. Success in CWMD operations depends on the effective integration of equipment, trained personnel, and proven tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP). The CBDP is developing capabilities that can be employed at home and abroad, on and off installations, with local and state responders, and to assist allies or other coalition partners across a range of operations. Another significant focus area the Department is addressing is the threat of biological warfare. Broad spectrum medical countermeasures are being developed to defend against genetically engineered or naturally mutating pathogens for which there are no current defenses along with capabilities to manage the consequence of major catastrophic events.

Consequence Management:

The Department remains committed to providing capabilities to mitigate the effects of WMD attacks at home and abroad. There are 55 WMD CSTs and 17 CBRNE Enhanced Response Force Packages (CERFPs). The WMD CSTs provide CBRN identification, assessment and technical advice. The CERFPs provide medical, decontamination, casualty search and rescue, technical rescue and C4I. The Department has also fielded a domestic CBRN Consequence Management Response Force (CCMRF) to assist the Lead Agency with capabilities ranging from personnel decontamination and medical triage to air and ground transportation. Additional CCMRFs will be sourced in the near future to provide increased capability. The Department is also in the process of evaluating and assessing mitigation measures to enhance DOD's capability to respond to CBRN incidents contained on U.S. military installations abroad and in support of foreign partners in the event of an overseas WMD attack.

Building Partnership Capacity:

The Department actively engages in International CBRN defense programs seeking cooperative efforts in advanced development and procurement, doctrine and requirements, and science and technology. These efforts seek to expand the Nation's ability to reduce and, where possible, eliminate or minimize the threats posed by traditional CBRNE weapons. The Joint Staff assists in the development of international military standardization and interoperability agreements involving chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) defense. The Joint Staff engages in numerous international organizations, including: the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Joint Capability Group on CBRN Defense; the NATO CBRN Medical Working Group; Australia, Canada, United Kingdom and United States CBRN Memorandum of Agreement and Counterproliferation of WMD Bilateral Agreements (South Korea, Japan, United Kingdom, France, Israel, and Indonesia). These international organizations are exchanging research, development, test and evaluation efforts in CBRN detection, identification, sampling, protection, medical countermeasures, and modeling and simulation. They are also conducting numerous multinational Table Top Exercises that have identified capability gaps and potential DOTMLPF solutions.

OPERATIONAL RESERVE

10. Senator PRYOR. Admiral Mullen, what is your opinion of an Operational Reserve? Do you believe it is necessary?

Admiral MULLEN. I believe that having an Operational Reserve is vital for our national security. There are several factors that have evolved and are common for an Operational Reserve. One is our continued demand for timely utilization of select Reserve military capability. Second, there is an ongoing paradigm shift for assured, predictable and responsive access to a more ready Reserve component in order to sustain current and future operations while still maintaining the Citizen-Warrior ethos of our Reserves. This means we are continuing to invest more resources in our Reserve components to become better manned, trained, and equipped to be readily available for mobilization and employment as cohesive units while providing predictability to families and employers.

Each of the Military Services over the past decade and since the First Gulf War have continued to shift their respective Reserve components from a Strategic Force towards an Operational Reserve Force construct based on evolving mission capability requirements and necessity.

The Military Services believe operationalzing their respective Reserve component is a necessary part of our overall National and Military Strategy to support Homeland Defense, plus current and future combat operations. We also are actively involved in reviewing the recommendations taken from the Commission on the National Guard and Reserve report that advocates reviewing the laws, policies, and procedures which further supports operationalzing our Reserve components.

PREPOSITIONED STOCKS

11. Senator PRYOR. Admiral Mullen, our prepositioned stocks have been drawn down for use in Iraq and Afghanistan and the depletion of these stocks increases strategic risk in that it hinders our ability to respond quickly to emerging conflicts. What is the DOD's plan to reconstitute the forward deployed war stocks?

Admiral MULLEN. Our prepositioned capabilities have been and will continue to be essential to sustaining the global war on terrorism. We project the current

prepositioned capabilities to be fully reconstituted by fiscal year 2015, contingent on available resources and emergent operational requirements. Currently, most of the Army prepositioned equipment has been employed in support of the global war on terrorism. The remaining prepositioned combat capability is in a high state of readiness and the Army maintains unit sets afloat to support port opening operations to receive strategically deployed capabilities. By fiscal year 2015 the Army projects to have its full objective of three Heavy Brigade Combat Teams (HBCT), two Infantry Brigade Combat Teams, five Sustainment Brigades, a Fires Brigade, an Infantry Battalion, and associated wheeled augmentation sets, watercraft, and sustainment stocks. Of the Marine Corps three Maritime Preposition Squadrons, two have less than their full complements of equipment. They will be reconstituted through scheduled maintenance cycles and provide full capabilities in 2011 and 2012. The third is currently fully capable to support contingency operations. As DOD's prepositioned sets are being reconstituted, the Services are updating them with equipment and supplies that provide balanced and flexible capabilities. These capabilities will support a range of operations from major contingency to lower spectrum operations.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

OUR NATION'S STRATEGIC DEPTH

12. Senator CLINTON. Secretary Gates and Admiral Mullen, recently, Army Vice Chief of Staff General Richard Cody testified before the Readiness and Management Support Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee on the state of readiness of the Army. He testified that the current demand on our forces in Iraq and Afghanistan "limits our ability to provide ready forces for other contingencies." Both the Army and the Marine Corps told the committee that they are not sure if their forces could handle a new conflict if one came along. In particular, General Cody noted our Nation's "lack of strategic depth."

In light of General Cody's comment regarding our Nation's "strategic depth," what missions are our armed forces not performing or are incapable of performing because of their commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan?

Dr. GATES. We continually assess the capabilities of our forces to perform against plans and assigned missions in all regions. These assessments, which are classified, are delineated in the Quarterly Readiness Report to Congress. In summary, while significant portions of our ground forces are currently involved in operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, there should be no doubt that we have formidable capabilities to respond around the globe in the event of another crisis. Our air and naval forces can respond swiftly and effectively to any armed aggression. We also have significant capabilities in our noncommitted ground force, particularly the Reserve component, which can be called upon to fully mobilize, if required, to meet urgent national needs. We would also call upon all the instruments of national power, to include diplomatic, informational, and economic, to address the situation at hand.

Admiral MULLEN. Our Armed Forces are performing a wide array of combat and noncombat missions throughout the world. Although our forces are strained, we can perform all missions and execute all contingency plans. With the advent of combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff restructured DOD priorities throughout the world. This has affected our noncombat operations and ability to respond to a second full-spectrum major combat operation (MCO).

Every year, combatant commanders determine their regional priorities and request resources to fulfill their demands. Due to our focus on combat operations in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), we curtailed or scaled back some of our theater security cooperation (TSC) efforts and multi-lateral exercises. Combatant commanders continue to conduct TSC efforts throughout their areas of responsibility; however, fiscal year 2009 demands will not be completely sourced for TSC and other partnership-building activities. Sourcing deficiencies will not prevent combatant commanders from implementing mitigation measures to accomplish priority missions. This is no different than previous years prior to the global war on terrorism.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR CLAIRE MCCASKILL

AL QAEDA AND THE SECURITY OF THE AMERICAN HOMELAND

13. Senator MCCASKILL. Secretary Gates and Admiral Mullen, while the bulk of the administration's focus in terms of troops, resources, and taxpayer dollars has

been on Iraq, it seems the most pressing threat to the homeland security of the United States comes from the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. Admiral Mullen, you and Central Intelligence Agency Director General Michael Hayden have publicly stated that a future attack on the United States will most likely come from the al Qaeda group operating along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border in the largely ungoverned tribal areas. Despite these statements, our continued troop commitment in Iraq has affected our effort in Afghanistan. Admiral Mullen, you have stated, "in Afghanistan, we do what we can, in Iraq we do what we must." This has led you to characterize our effort to stabilize Afghanistan as an "economy-of-force operation" because "our main focus, militarily, in the region and in the world right now is rightly and firmly in Iraq."

Can you characterize your assessment, based on all information available to you, of whether AQI is planning to launch, or is capable of launching, attacks on the United States Homeland from Iraq?

Dr. GATES. [Deleted.]

Admiral MULLEN. [Deleted.]

14. Senator MCCASKILL. Secretary Gates and Admiral Mullen, is the core organization and purpose of AQI oriented at attacks within Iraq or outside of Iraq?

Dr. GATES. [Deleted.]

Admiral MULLEN. [Deleted.]

15. Senator MCCASKILL. Secretary Gates and Admiral Mullen, did AQI exist prior to the United States invasion of Iraq and, if so, was it affiliated with the broader al Qaeda international network at that time?

Dr. GATES. [Deleted.]

Admiral MULLEN. [Deleted.]

16. Senator MCCASKILL. Secretary Gates and Admiral Mullen, if we know that al Qaeda is planning attacks against America from the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, why is the effort in Afghanistan not a higher priority?

Dr. GATES. [Deleted.]

Admiral MULLEN. Developing a stable, free, democratic Iraq that is not a threat to its neighbors and is an ally on the war on terror has been the U.S. main military focus. An Iraq that cannot govern, defend, and sustain itself jeopardizes our vital national interests in the region. Further, risk associated with a drawdown from Iraq that is not conditions-based outweigh risk emanating from the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region. However, Afghanistan continues to be a top military priority. Their are a total of 33,000 U.S. and 29,000 coalition troops currently deployed to Afghanistan, the highest level since the beginning of combat operations in that AOR. We are also seeing a higher level of operational effort by Pakistani forces, which has resulted in lower levels of cross-border infiltration into Afghanistan by al Qaeda and Taliban forces. The U.S. and our allies in Afghanistan continue to work closely with Pakistan to address the cross-border movement of enemy forces as well as their sanctuaries along the border.

It is important to note that both conflicts (Iraq and Afghanistan) compete for many of the same critical resources. As security in Iraq improves, U.S. force levels will decrease consistent with the commander's assessment of conditions on the ground, allowing the military to reset, reconstitute, and shift focus as required by existing and emerging threats. As indicated by the recent U.S. Marine Corps deployment to Afghanistan, the U.S. commitment is strong and will continue to be so. The military will continue to press al Qaeda and its associated network in Iraq, Afghanistan and wherever else they operate.

17. Senator MCCASKILL. Secretary Gates and Admiral Mullen, why has the DOD continually acted consistent with an Iraq first policy, in terms of priorities, when threats to our Homeland appear most densely concentrated in Afghanistan, which the DOD is clearly assigning a lower priority and acknowledges is under-resourced?

Dr. GATES. The defense of the territory of the United States, its people, and interests requires an active defense-in-depth, which includes detecting and countering threats at their source. Destroying the al Qaeda network remains our most immediate and important task to deter and prevent any further attacks on the homeland. Al Qaeda's leaders still view Iraq as the central front in their global strategy, sending funding, direction, and foreign fighters to Iraq. Winning in Iraq, which includes defeating al Qaeda, is critical to our success in the long war and protecting our vital national interests throughout the Middle East and abroad.

The Department is fully committed to success in Afghanistan. There currently are some 38,000 U.S. troops assigned to Afghanistan. More than 21,000 of these per-

sonnel are assigned to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), while the remaining 17,000 are assigned to OEF missions, which include both counterterrorism and training and equipping the Afghan National Security Forces. Some 3,500 U.S. marines recently deployed to Afghanistan, of which more than 2,400 are deployed to Afghanistan's volatile southern region. The remaining 1,100 marines are supporting the mission to train the Afghan National Police. Our allies and partners also are contributing in important ways to the mission in Afghanistan. Some 30,000 non-U.S. troops are deployed throughout the country, and ISAF leads 26 Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan—of which 14 are commanded by non-U.S. force contributors. Nonetheless, more is needed—the ISAF Commander has identified requirements that remain unfilled. These include maneuver forces, air assets, Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams, and additional PRTs. The Department works closely with our allies and partners to encourage them to help fill these requirements.

Admiral MULLEN. The defense of the territory of the United States, its people, and interests requires an active defense-in-depth, which includes detecting and countering threats at their source. Destroying the al Qaeda network remains our most immediate and important task to deter and prevent any further attacks on the homeland. Al Qaeda's senior leaders still view Iraq as the central front in their global strategy, sending funding, direction, and foreign fighters to Iraq. Winning in Iraq, which includes defeating al Qaeda, is critical to our success in the long war and protecting our vital national interests throughout the Middle East and abroad. An Iraq that cannot govern, defend, and sustain itself jeopardizes our vital national interests in the region.

18. Senator MCCASKILL. Secretary Gates and Admiral Mullen, how much of AQI's diminished operating capacity can be attributed to the large American troop presence in Iraq? Specifically, do you believe that the Sunni "awakening" that pre-dated the surge has significantly damaged AQI?

Dr. GATES. [Deleted.]

Admiral MULLEN. [Deleted.]

19. Senator MCCASKILL. Secretary Gates and Admiral Mullen, what role has the Shiite Maliki Government had in making sure that al Qaeda does not have a sanctuary in Iraq?

Dr. GATES. [Deleted.]

Admiral MULLEN. [Deleted.]

20. Senator MCCASKILL. Secretary Gates and Admiral Mullen, would you agree that even the Iranians do not want AQI to take hold next door in Iraq? In short, are there not several factors other than American troop presence in Iraq that have destabilized AQI, and that would remain in that region even if American troops did not remain at pre-surge levels?

Dr. GATES. [Deleted.]

Admiral MULLEN. [Deleted.]

21. Senator MCCASKILL. Secretary Gates and Admiral Mullen, what is the DOD doing to increase the availability of resources to ongoing operations in Afghanistan?

Dr. GATES. We recently increased the effort in Afghanistan by deploying the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit as well as 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines. The Department of Defense and the Joint Staff continue to look at force availability for Afghanistan.

Admiral MULLEN. We recently increased the effort in Afghanistan by deploying the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit as well as 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines. The Department of Defense and the Joint Staff continue to look at force availability for Afghanistan with four principal considerations in mind;

1. Continued support for and success in Iraq. As has been clearly indicated by General Petraeus and reinforced by Presidents of the United States, forces that might become available as a result of a drawdown in Iraq must be well thought through in order to ensure Iraq gains are not negatively impacted. Joint Forces Command is continuously making assessments of this force balance.

2. Health of the force. The services ability to continue to provide forces, whether for Iraq or Afghanistan, must be considered in terms of overall stress on our forces. Increasing the dwell time of our forces is a key component of any decision about resourcing Afghanistan requirements.

3. Strategic Reserve. The Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff must also consider the Strategic Reserve for our Nation and

the impact that an increase in resources to Afghanistan might have on reconstitution of Strategic Reserve to respond to other contingencies.

4. Success in Afghanistan. The U.S. and our allies are committed to success in Afghanistan and hard decisions about resources will need to be made if we are to turn the tide against the insurgency and support the Afghan Government in security, reconstruction, and development. Bottom-line: we are working within DOD and the IA to develop a resourcing plan that meets the near-term and long-term needs of the operators in Afghanistan.

FUNDING AND SUPPORT FROM OTHERS FOR OUR EFFORTS IN AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ

22. Senator MCCASKILL. Secretary Gates, at our hearing with General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker, I asked Ambassador Crocker whether our future security agreements with Iraq will require the Iraqis to pay for the cost of our temporary bases and other related expenditures. Ambassador Crocker seemed to have not previously considered such an arrangement, but appeared open to taking the idea to the Iraqis. As you may be aware, our long-term security agreements with many other countries require the host country to offset some of the cost of our bases and related expenditures. This is an area that is important to me because of the incredible financial burden Iraq has placed on American taxpayers. I also note, as I did to Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus, that the United States is running a massive budget deficit while the Iraqis are running a budget surplus. I believe it crucial that the Iraqis shoulder a greater amount of the burden of securing their nation, including offsetting, wherever appropriate, American expenditures made to support operations in Iraq.

I am also interested in how we can get our North American Treaty Organization (NATO) allies to make a greater financial commitment to our effort in Afghanistan. While I applaud France and Romania for recently adding troops to the NATO force in that country, as you have stated, it appears unlikely that NATO will commit a large number of troops to Afghanistan. Since our NATO allies are unwilling to commit troops to Afghanistan, I would like to see them make an increased financial commitment to the reconstruction of the country and to training the Afghan Army. President Bush recently announced that he plans to pledge an additional $4 billion in aid for Afghanistan at the international donors conference to be held in Paris in June. I would like to see us leverage the President's commitment and the Paris conference to achieve a greater financial contribution from our allies. I am aware that the administration hopes the conference will raise a total of $12 billion–$15 billion to fund Afghan reconstruction projects. It is my hope that the conference will raise at least that much, if not more, from our allies.

What is being done to increase Iraqi budget execution and, more importantly, to offset or reduce American expenditures in Iraq?

Dr. GATES. The U.S. Treasury Department and Department of State are in the lead for enhancing the spending capacity of the GOI. There are 13 ministerial capacity development teams consisting of over 400 advisors working with various GOI ministries to improve Iraqi technical capabilities.

A primary focus is to improve Iraqi budget execution which in turn helps the GOI spend its own money on reconstruction and security. This entails, but is not limited to: (1) documenting budget execution policies and procedures; (2) training Iraqis (central ministries and provincial governments) on capital budget execution; and (3) training U.S. personnel deployed to PRTs to improve the PRTs' ability to assist the provincial governments in executing their budgets.

As a result of these efforts, Iraqi commitments to assume financial responsibilities and offset U.S. Government expenditures have already expanded significantly. In addition to passing a capital reconstruction budget of $13 billion and security budget of $9 billion in 2008, the GOI recently funded cost-sharing initiatives for sustaining and equipping the ISF, created a fund for urgently needed reconstruction projects that will be coordinated with U.S. commanders, and has begun to transition the costs associated with the maintenance of existing U.S. Government-funded Iraqi facilities, among others.

Since 2005, the GOI has increased its share of the costs associated with ISF development from 29 to 75 percent. Furthermore, due to increased Iraqi spending, the Department has not requested any funds for capital expenditures in fiscal year 2008. On funding for the ISF, the Department asked for $3 billion in fiscal year 2008 and $2 billion in fiscal year 2009. The fiscal year 2009 request is 52 percent less than the average ISF funding levels between fiscal year 2005 and fiscal year 2008, and does not include any funds for infrastructure.

23. Senator MCCASKILL. Secretary Gates, is it unreasonable that the United States should request or demand offsets from the Iraqi Government of some American expenditures in Iraq, especially when it is running a budget surplus?

Dr. GATES. No, it is not unreasonable for the U.S. to request from the GOI increased contributions for the costs associated with capital reconstruction and development of the ISF. This is why U.S. Government officials are working with GOI to more effectively utilize its financial resources in support of these needs.

We have worked closely with the Iraqis to gradually transition U.S. funding for ISF development as the GOI demonstrates the capacity required to support the transition. As a result of these efforts, the Iraqi Ministries of Defense and Interior have assumed responsibility of various U.S. Government-funded acquisition and life support contracts and developed a number of cost-sharing agreements to offset U.S. expenditures in Iraq.

Moreover, the PRTs are working with local governments and tribal councils to help plan, prioritize, and execute Iraqi capital expenditure budgets to further offset U.S. spending on ISF infrastructure and capital reconstruction projects. Therefore, as ministerial and provincial capacity increases and matures, U.S. Government officials will continue to work with the GOI to transfer additional funding responsibilities to the Iraqis.

24. Senator MCCASKILL. Secretary Gates, in what areas, such as base operations and support, as I have suggested, would it be appropriate to negotiate for Iraqi funding of the American presence in Iraq?

Dr. GATES. It is appropriate for the GOI to assume responsibility for a greater share of the costs required to sustain and equip the ISF as well as the costs associated with the development of critical infrastructure, long-term capital reconstruction projects, delivery of essential services, establishment of vocational and technical training centers, and the creation of civil and public works programs throughout Iraq.

It would not be appropriate for the GOI to fund U.S. base operations as such funding from the GOI would require Iraqi Council of Representatives' (CoR) approval. Alongside the political risk of budget defeat in the CoR, there would be no way of preventing the CoR from attaching additional provisions that could affect the operational flexibility of U.S. forces in Iraq (i.e. requiring pre-approval of expenditures prior to execution).

25. Senator MCCASKILL. Secretary Gates, how extensively is the United States pursuing such financial assistance, in any area, from the Iraqis?

Dr. GATES. U.S. Government officials regularly engage the Iraqi leadership on the need to expend a greater portion of surplus revenues on security, capital reconstruction, and strategic investments that will stimulate and sustain economic growth.

Furthermore, as a result of the U.S. Government's sustained engagement with Iraqi leaders, we expect the GOI to pass its first supplemental budget later this year. This estimated $4 to $5 billion supplemental will augment existing provincial and ministerial capital accounts of $13.2 billion, and further demonstrate the willingness of the Iraqi leadership to use surplus oil revenues to offset U.S. Government expenditures.

In addition to developing a 2008 supplemental budget, the GOI recently funded cost-sharing initiatives for sustaining and equipping the ISF, created a fund for urgently needed reconstruction projects that will be coordinated with U.S. commanders, established vocational and technical training centers throughout Iraq and has begun to assume the costs associated with the maintenance of existing U.S. Government-funded Iraqi facilities, among others.

We will continue to identify cost-sharing opportunities with the GOI.

26. Senator MCCASKILL. Secretary Gates, what specifically do you plan on doing in the months leading up to the Paris conference to encourage our NATO allies to make a greater financial commitment to Afghanistan's reconstruction?

Dr. GATES. The U.S. Government looks forward to joining the international community to renew our long-term commitment to Afghanistan at the June 12 Paris Support Conference. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will be leading our delegation. Afghanistan has made enormous progress since 2001, but stability remains fragile in many parts of the country and is dependent on the continued investment of the international community. The Paris Conference is an opportunity to build on the international community's renewed security commitment to Afghanistan reached at the NATO Summit in Bucharest with complementary achievements on the civilian side. The overarching goal of the conference is to reaffirm our long-term commitment to Afghanistan and to focus additional resources behind an effec-

tive strategy. To this end, we seek to surpass the pledge total achieved at the 2006 London Conference ($10.5 billion) and are endeavoring to ensure that each donor pledges more than it did at the London Conference. The U.S. Department of State is leading the U.S. Government's overall effort to increase donor contributions and is implementing an overall U.S. strategy to reach out to donors. My office is actively supporting these efforts, along with members of the United States Agency for International Development and the U.S. Department of Treasury, which include multiple contacts with donor governments at various official levels.

27. Senator MCCASKILL. Secretary Gates, do you believe the $12–$15 billion the administration hopes to raise is the most we can expect NATO to contribute? Why do you believe we cannot get them to contribute more?

Dr. GATES. The U.S. Government seeks to surpass the pledge total achieved at the 2006 London Conference ($10.5 billion) at the June 12 Paris Support Conference and is endeavoring to ensure that each donor pledges more than it did at the London Conference. The U.S. Department of State is implementing an overall U.S. strategy to reach out to donors via a number of worldwide demarches, engagements with key leaders in capitals and at regional meetings such as, for example, the U.S.-E.U. Summit, and continuous discussions at various levels with donor countries. We are optimistic that donor pledges will be substantial and will complement the security commitments reached at the NATO Summit in Bucharest.

[Whereupon, at 5:04 p.m., the committee adjourned.]

○