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IRAQ: THE CROCKER-PETRAEUS REPORT

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BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE

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IRAQ: THE CROCKER–PETRAEUS REPORT

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2007

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:31 a.m., in room SH–216, Hart Senate Office Building, Hon. Joseph R. Biden, Jr. (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Senators Biden, Dodd, Kerry, Feingold, Boxer, Bill Nelson, Obama, Menendez, Cardin, Casey, Webb, Lugar, Hagel, Coleman, Corker, Sununu, Murkowski, DeMint, Isakson, and Vitter.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOSEPH R. BIDEN, JR., U.S. SENATOR FROM DELAWARE

The CHAIRMAN. The committee will come to order. The hearing will come to order.

Six years ago this morning, agents of al-Qaeda attacked the United States of America and murdered 2,998 people. So, I'd like you all to please join me, at the beginning of this hearing, for a moment of silence for the victims of 9/11.

[A moment of silence was observed.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Ambassador Crocker, General Petraeus, welcome. We've been seeing a lot of one another, and I want to thank Ambassador Crocker for his hospitality to me last week in both Ramadi and in Baghdad. And I'm glad to see you again, General. Welcome home, as brief as this stay may be.

You're here today to give the American people a progress report on the war in Iraq and on the President's decision in January to surge more forces into Iraq. Americans are hearing a lot about this surge, and they want to know whether it's succeeding, whether the violence in Iraq is going up or down, and what impact that has on the future of Iraq, and, most importantly, from their perspective, the future of our men and women in uniform that are there, as well as the civilians we have stationed there.

General Petraeus, you say the numbers show that violence is decreasing; others, including the independent Government Accounting Office, have different figures and contrary conclusions. But, in my view, this debate, in a sense, misses the point. The one thing virtually everyone now agrees on is that there is no purely military solution in Iraq, that lasting stability requires a political settlement among the Sunnis, the Shias, and the Kurds.

In announcing the surge, President Bush said his primary purpose was just that, to buy time for a political settlement to emerge

in Baghdad. And so, from my perspective, the most important questions we have to ask are these: Are we any closer to a lasting political settlement in Iraq at the national level today than we were when the surge began, 8 months ago? And if we continue to surge for another 6 months, is there any evidence that the Sunnis, the Shia, and the Kurds will stop killing each other and start governing together. In my judgment, I must tell you, based on my experience and my observation here, as well as in-country, the answer to both those questions is "No."

First, are we any closer to a political settlement? According to you, General Petraeus, in a letter to U.S. forces and civilians in Iraq last Friday, you wrote—and I appreciate your candor—you said, "Many of us had hoped this summer would be a time for tangible political progress at the national level. It has not worked out as we had hoped." Not according to the administration's own report card has it worked out, either. As of July, Iraq's Government had failed to make satisfactory progress in five of the eight political benchmarks. The Government Accounting Office gives the Iraq Government even lower grades.

And not, according to the Iraqi people, apparently, have things gotten a lot better. They're voting on the surge with their feet. When the surge began, about 50,000 Iraqis a month were fleeing their homes for fear of sectarian violence, and today they're leaving their homes at a rate as high as 100,000 a month, since the surge. Simply put, Iraqis, both Sunnis and Shiites, still live every day in deadly fear of each other. And until their leaders agree on some way to share power peacefully, that fear is not going to go away, and Iraq will not find stability.

Of course, when we surge American troops into a neighborhood, they do a remarkable job of stopping violence and protecting the people. I know it sounds trite to say, but I—every one of my trips, I am more impressed with the raw, sheer bravery—I don't use the word lightly—bravery of your troops, who get in those up-armored Humvees, ride down those roads, move through those neighborhoods. It just is absolutely stunning that they do it. And—but the fact is that the surge of our troops in the neighborhoods, although it has some salutary impact, when we leave, absent a political settlement, every one of the troops I spoke to believe those destructive forces are going to return. Your troops—whether I'm talking to a private or a lance corporal or a general—I've not found anybody who doesn't think that, unless there's a significant political settlement, once they leave—the troops—that chaos will return.

In Anbar province, which I just visited with the Ambassador, we've had success in turning Iraqi Sunni tribes against Sunni jihadists. But that's not particularly relevant to the central problem, and that is the sectarian violence of Sunnis killing Shias. In my discussion with both the tribal leaders, as well as Sunni leaders, I didn't detect any sense of any greater trust or willingness to trust or cooperate with the Shia—the Shia government in Baghdad.

If we killed or captured every jihadist in Iraq tomorrow, we would still face a major sectarian war that is pitting Iraqis' future against our interests. The fact of the matter is that American lives remain in jeopardy. And, as I said, if every single jihadi in the

world was killed tomorrow, we still have a major, major war on our hands.

Second, in continuing this surge of forces for another 6 months, is that likely to change that reality? The conclusion I have reached is, "No." The surge, whatever tactical or temporary security gains it might achieve, is at the service of a fundamentally flawed strategy, and that strategy is, the administration continues to believe that we can achieve political progress in Iraq by building a strong national unity government in Baghdad that secures the trust of the Iraqi people. In my view, gentlemen, I don't think that's going to happen in the lifetime of any of us. There is no trust within that central government in Baghdad, no trust in the government by the people, and no capacity of that government to deliver security and services. And, absent an occupation we cannot sustain, or return of a dictator we cannot want, Iraq, in my view, cannot be governed from the center, at this point in history.

So, without a settlement, the surge is, at best, a stopgap that delays, but will not prevent, chaos. Its net effect will be to put more American lives at risk—in my view, with very little prospect of success. And I don't think that is conscionable.

A majority of Senators believe the time is now to start drawing down U.S. forces, not just to presurge levels, but beyond them, and to limit the mission of those remaining to fight al-Qaeda, train Iraqis, and help protect the borders. But, while starting to leave Iraq is necessary, it's not enough. We also have to—we also have to shape what we leave behind, so that we do not trade a dictator for chaos.

A number of us have offered alternatives. One of the possibilities I've offered, if—it is not a guarantee for stability of Iraq if we leave—is to, in fact, beef up the federal concept that exists in their constitution. It's based on a reality that Sunni, Shia, and Kurds are not ready to entrust their fate to one another. Instead, we have to give the Iraqi warring faction breathing room in regions, with local control over the fabric of their daily lives—police, education, jobs, marriage, religion—as, I might add, the Iraqi Constitution calls for. A limited central government would be in charge of common concerns, including distributing Iraqis' oil revenues. A federal, decentralized Iraq, in my view, is our last best hope for a stable Iraq, and we should refocus our efforts on making federalism work for all Iraqis, at least that is the view that I strongly—that I strongly hold.

I would initiate a diplomatic surge, not a military surge, to do just that, bringing in the United Nations, major countries, and Iraq's neighbors, to help implement and oversee the political settlement that I'm proposing.

No one, as I said with the Ambassador—kind enough to allow me to be with him at this conference, this reconstruction conference in Ramadi—as I said to the Iraqis assembled around the table, we cannot possibly want peace and security in Iraq more than the Iraqi people want it. It is up to them. We can help them get there by bringing power and responsibility down to the local level and by taking fear out of Iraq's future. But that fear will only come out when there's a political settlement.

Ambassador Crocker, General Petraeus, the American military, as you know better than I do, cannot sustain a war in Iraq with no end in sight at the levels we are there now, and the American people will not support an infinite war whose sole remaining purpose is to prevent the situation in Iraq from becoming worse than it is today. It's time to turn the corner, in my view, gentlemen. We should stop this surge and start bringing our troops home. We should end a political strategy in Iraq that cannot succeed, and begin one that can. I believe if we make these changes, we can still leave Iraq without leaving behind a civil war that turns into a regional war, endangering America's interests, not for a year or two, but for a generation.

So, gentlemen, I'm anxious to hear your testimony, and I'm anxious to be able to get to answer your specific—asking you specific questions about the overall strategy of the administration, and this surge, in particular.

I now yield to the Senator from Indiana, Chairman Lugar.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. RICHARD G. LUGAR, U.S. SENATOR FROM INDIANA

Senator LUGAR. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I join you in welcoming General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker to our committee. Their report is essential for Congress and the American people as we evaluate the complex circumstances and policy options we face with respect to United States involvement in Iraq.

Our national debate has framed two interdependent steps to the current surge strategy. We're attempting, first, to reduce the violence in Iraq through application of additional American troops, better training of Iraqi forces, and tactics aimed at sustaining stability in key neighborhoods. Second, we are hoping to use the breathing space created by improved security to induce Iraqi political leaders to conclude meaningful compromises on governmental and power-sharing.

Now, in our last hearing on Iraq, featuring the GAO report on benchmarks, I expressed skepticism that success or failure of the benchmarks will be determinative in Iraq. Benchmarks are an important starting point for debate, but they do not answer many questions, including the most fundamental question pertaining to Iraq; namely, do Iraqis want to be Iraqis? By this, I mean, are the Iraqi people, most of whom are now organized according to sectarian and tribal loyalties, willing to sacrifice their own pursuit of national or regional hegemony by granting their sectarian rivals political and economic power? Can a unified society be achieved, despite the extreme sectarian fears and resentments incubated during the repressive reign of Saddam and intensified during the recent period of sectarian bloodletting? Is there sufficient room for national reconciliation, when many Sunnis continue to see their political preeminence as a birthright, and most Shiites believe that their numerical superiority and the oppression they suffered under Saddam Hussein give them the right to dominate the new Iraq? And, even if polling indicates that many Iraqis do want to live in a unified Iraq, how does this theoretical bloc acquire the political power and courage needed to stare down militia leaders, sectarian

strongmen, criminal gangs, who routinely employ violence for their own tribal and personal ends?

I framed the question in these stark terms because it underscores that achieving benchmarks, which have been a very difficult process up to this point, may be the least of the challenges ahead of us. Benchmarks measure only the official actions of the Iraqi leaders and the current status of Iraq's political and economic rebuilding effort. They do not measure the degree to which Iraqis intend to pursue tribal or sectarian agendas over the long term, irrespective of the decisions in Baghdad. They do not measure the impact of regional players who may choose to support or subvert stability in Iraq. They also do not measure the degree to which progress is dependent on current American military operations, which cannot be sustained indefinitely.

Thus, the most uncertain step in the path to a unified, functioning Iraqi society is likely to be when benchmark successes would have been preserved and translated into sustainable national reconciliation. That reconciliation would have to be resilient enough to be—to withstand blood feuds, government corruption, brain drain, calculated terrorist acts, external interference that will challenge social order.

One can debate, as many will do this week, whether progress in Iraq has been sufficient to justify continuing American sacrifices. But the greatest risk for a United States policy is not that we are incapable of making progress, but that this progress may be largely beside the point, given the divisions that now afflict Iraqi society. The risk is that our efforts are comparable to a farmer expending his resources and efforts to plant a crop on a flood plain without factoring in the probability that waters may rise. In my judgment, some type of success in Iraq is possible, but, as policymakers, we should acknowledge that we are facing extraordinarily narrow margins for achieving our goals.

Our preoccupation with benchmarks is typical of our "one-step-at-a-time" perspective related to Iraq, in which the political horizon is limited to the next major event. Now, in mid-September 2007, we have arrived at such a milestone—the delivery of the Petraeus-Crocker Report. The conventional wisdom is that the administration will cite enough progress to challenge calls for withdrawal, as lacking resolve, but not enough progress to alter the basic fault lines of the Iraq debate.

This debate over progress may be less illuminating than determining whether the administration is finally defining a clear political/military strategy, planning for followup contingencies, and engaging in robust regional diplomacy. Each of these elements is essential if we are to expand our chances for success.

At this stage of the conflict, with our military strained by Iraq deployments, our global advantage is being diminished by the weight of our burden in Iraq, it is not enough for the administration to counsel patience until the next milestone or the next report. We need to see a strategy for how our troops and other resources in Iraq might be employed to fundamentally change the equation. For example, are we going to attempt the sophisticated task of leveraging our new relationships with Sunni forces into a rough balance of power with the Shiites? Are we going to build bridges

between our new friends in the Sunni community and Shiite elements? How will we maintain any enthusiasm among Shiite leaders for our goals if they perceive we are strengthening Sunni rivals?

Even as the administration defines its current strategy, it is vital that it plan for a range of post-September contingencies. The surge must not be an excuse for failing to prepare for the next phase of our involvement, whether that is a partial withdrawal, a gradual redeployment, or some other option. We saw, in 2003, after the initial invasion of Iraq, the disastrous results of failing to play adequately for contingencies.

Currently, because of the politically charged nature of the debate, military planning and diplomacy related to any so-called Plan B are constrained by concerns that either would be perceived as evidence of a lack of confidence in the President's surge strategy. We need to lay the groundwork for sustainable alternatives, so that, as the President and Congress move to a new plan, it can be implemented effectively and rapidly.

Finally, the pace and intensity of American regional diplomacy to Iraq has failed to match the urgency and magnitude of the problem. Although Secretary Rice and her team have made some inroads with the gulf nations and other players, we still lack a forum in which to engage Iraq's neighbors on a constant basis. We are allowing conditions in which miscalculation can thrive. Every nation surrounding Iraq has intense interest in what is happening there, yet the three Iraq Regional Working Groups, established at the Sharm el-Sheikh conference in early May, have met only once since then. Broader regional conferences, such as the one that took place in Baghdad this past weekend, also have convened so infrequently that they have had little positive impact on Iraq's status.

An expanded ministerial meeting of Iraq's neighbors is scheduled to occur in Istanbul next month. This is positive, but it's not a substitute for a continuous, visible forum in which we ensure the transparency of national interests and actions.

Bold and creative regional diplomacy is not just an accompaniment to our efforts in Iraq, it is a precondition for the success of any policy. We cannot sustain a successful policy in Iraq unless we repair alliances, recruit more international participants in Iraq, anticipate refugee flows, prevent regional aggression, generate new basing options, and otherwise prepare for future developments. If we have not made substantial diplomatic progress by the time a post-surge policy is implemented, our options will be severely constrained, and we will be guessing at a viable course in a rapidly evolving environment.

I thank the chairman for calling this hearing, and look forward to the testimony of our witnesses.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador Crocker.

STATEMENT OF HON. RYAN C. CROCKER, AMBASSADOR TO IRAQ, DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC

Ambassador CROCKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have submitted a statement, for the record, that I assume has been distributed to the committee. With your permission, I'd like to summarize that statement now.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection, your entire statement will be placed in the record.

Ambassador CROCKER. Mr. Chairman, Senator Lugar, thank you for the opportunity to address this committee this morning.

My intention today is to give you an assessment of political, economic, and diplomatic developments in Iraq. In doing so, I will not minimize the enormity of the challenges faced by Iraqis, nor the complexity of the situation; yet, at the same time, I intend to demonstrate that it is possible for the United States to see its goals realized in Iraq, and that Iraqis are capable of tackling and addressing the problems confronting them today. In my view, a secure, stable, democratic Iraq at peace with its neighbors is attainable.

In my judgment, the cumulative trajectory of political, economic, and diplomatic developments in Iraq is upward, although the slope of that line is not steep. The process will not be quick. It will be uneven, punctuated by setbacks as well as achievements, and it will require substantial U.S. resolve and commitment. There will be no single moment at which we can claim victory. Any turning point will likely only be recognized in retrospect.

This is a sober assessment, but it should not be a disheartening one. Iraq is experiencing a revolution, not just regime change. It is only by understanding this that we can appreciate what is happening in Iraq and what Iraqis have achieved, as well as maintain a sense of realism about the challenges that remain.

Evaluating where Iraqis are today only makes sense in the context of where they have been. Any Iraqi under 40 years of age—and that is the overwhelming majority of the population—would have known nothing but the rule of the Baath Party before liberation 4½ years ago. Those 35 years were filled with crimes against humanity on every scale. Saddam Hussein ruled without mercy, not hesitating to use lethal force and torture against even those in his inner circle. His genocidal campaign against the Kurds, and savagery toward southern Shia, are well known. But he also used violence and intimidation as tools in the complete deconstruction of Iraqi society. No organization or institution survived that was not linked in some way to regime protection. He created a pervasive climate of fear in which even family members were afraid to talk to one another.

This is the legacy that Iraqis had as their history when Saddam's statue came down on April 9, 2003. No Nelson Mandela existed to emerge on the national political scene. Anyone with his leadership talents would not have survived. A new Iraq had to be built almost literally from scratch, and the builders, in most cases, were themselves, reduced to their most basic identity: Ethnic or sectarian.

Much progress has been made, particularly in building an institutional framework where there was none before. But, rather than being a period in which old animosities and suspicions were overcome, the past 18 months, in particular, have further strained Iraqi society. The sectarian violence of 2006 and early 2007 had its seeds in Saddam's social deconstruction, and it had dire consequences for the people of Iraq, as well as its politics. Extensive displacement

and widespread sectarian killings by al-Qaeda and other extremist groups have gnawed away at the already frayed fabric of Iraqi society and politics. It is no exaggeration to say that Iraq is, and will remain for some time, a traumatized society.

It is against this backdrop that developments in Iraqi national politics must be seen. Iraqis are facing some of the most profound political, economic, and security challenges imaginable. They are not simply grappling with the issue of who rules Iraq, but they are asking what kind of country Iraq will be, how it will be governed, and how Iraqis will share power and resources among each other. The constitution, approved in a 2005 referendum, answered some of these questions in theory, but much remains uncertain in both law and practice.

Some of the more promising political developments at the national level are neither measured in benchmarks nor visible to those far from Baghdad. For instance, there is a budding debate about federalism among Iraq's leaders, and, most importantly perhaps, within the Sunni community. Those living in places like Anbar and Salaheddin are beginning to realize how localities having more of a say in daily decisionmaking will empower their communities. No longer is an all-powerful Baghdad seen as the panacea to Iraq's problems.

We are also seeing Iraqis come to terms with complex issues, not by first constructing a national framework, but by tackling immediate problems. One such example is how the central government has accepted over 1,700 young men from the Abu Ghraib area west of Baghdad, including former members of insurgent groups, to be part of the Iraqi security forces; another is how the government, without much public fanfare, has contacted thousands of members of the former Iraqi Army, offering them retirement, return to the military, or public sector employment. So, without the proclamation of a general amnesty, we see amnesty being granted on the ground, and we are seeing de-Baathification reform, in the case of military officers with Baath Party linkages, in advance of national legislation. In both instances the seeds of reconciliation are being planted.

In some respects, the debates in Iraq on issues such as de-Baathification and provincial powers are akin to those that surrounded our civil rights movement and our own debate on States' rights. With de-Baathification, Iraqis are struggling to come to terms with a vicious past. They are trying to balance fear that the Baath Party would one day return to power, with the recognition that many former members of the party are guilty of no crime and joined the organization not to repress others, but for personal survival. With provincial powers, Iraqis are grappling with very serious questions about the right balance between the center and the periphery in Iraq. Many—mainly Shia and Kurds—see the devolution of power to regions and provinces as being the best insurance against the rise of a future tyrannical figure in Baghdad. Others—mainly Sunnis—see Iraq, with its complex demographics, as in need of strong central authority.

I do believe that Iraq's leaders have the will to tackle the country's pressing problems, although it will take longer than we originally anticipated, because of the environment and the gravity of the issues before them. An important part of my judgment in this

regard was the effort made by Iraqi leaders this past summer. After weeks of preparatory work and many days of intensive meetings, Iraq's five most prominent national leaders from the three main communities issued a communiqué, on August 26, that noted agreement on draft legislation dealing with de-Baathification and provincial powers. This agreement by no means solves all of Iraq's problems, but the commitment of its leaders to work together on hard issues is encouraging. Perhaps most significantly, these five Iraqi leaders, together, decided to publicly express their joint desire to develop a long-term relationship with the United States.

At the provincial level, political gains have been more pronounced, particular in the north and west of Iraq, where the security improvements have been, in some places, dramatic. These have opened the door for meaningful politics.

In Anbar, as we know, security progress has been extraordinary. Al-Qaeda overplayed its hand. Recognizing that the coalition could help eject al-Qaeda, the tribes began to fight with us, not against us, and the landscape in Anbar is dramatically different as a result. Tribal representatives are now on the Provincial Council, which is meeting regularly to find ways of restoring services, developing the economy, and executing a development budget.

Shia extremists are also facing rejection. Recent attacks by the Iranian-backed Jaysh al-Mahdi on worshipers in the holy city of Karbala have provoked a backlash among—amongst moderate Shia and triggered a call by Muqtada al-Sadr for Jaysh al-Mahdi to cease attacks against Iraqis and coalition forces.

One of the key challenges for Iraqis now is to link these positive developments on the provinces to the central government in Baghdad. Unlike our States, Iraqi provinces have little ability to generate funds through taxation, making them dependent on the central government for resources. The growing ability of provinces to design and execute budgets, and the readiness of the central government to resource them, are success stories.

And, Mr. Chairman, you and I saw one element of that on September 6, when representatives of Iraq's senior federal leadership traveled to Anbar and announced a 70-percent increase in the 2007 provincial capital budget, as well as $50 million from the central budget, to compensate Anbaris for losses suffered in the fight against al-Qaeda.

In the economy, Iraq is starting to make some gains. The IMF estimates that economic growth will exceed 6 percent for 2007. Budget execution has improved substantially. The latest data shows that ministries and provincial councils have committed these funds at more than twice the rate of last year, and much of the success, the high performers in the budget picture, are in the provinces.

So, while there are signs of improvement, it is also true that the Iraqi economy is performing significantly under potential. Insecurity in the countryside raises transport costs, and especially affects manufacturing and agriculture. Electricity supply is improved in many parts of the country, but is still woefully inadequate in Baghdad. Many neighborhoods in the city receive 2 hours a day or less from the national grid, although power supplies for essential serv-

ices, such as water, pumping stations, or hospitals, are much better.

At the regional and international level, there is expanding engagement with Iraq. In August, the U.N. Security Council, at Iraq's invitation, provided the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq, UNAMI, with an expanded mandate through UNSCR 1770. The work of the International Compact with Iraq moves forward, jointly chaired by Iraq and the United Nations. Seventy-four countries pledged support for Iraq's economic reform efforts at a ministerial conference in May. The United Nations has reported progress in 75 percent of the 400 areas Iraq has identified for action. Later this month, the Iraqi Prime Minister and the U.N. Secretary General will chair a ministerial-level meeting in New York to discuss further progress under the compact and how UNSCR 1770 can be most effectively implemented.

Many of Iraq's neighbors recognize that they have a stake in the outcome of the current conflict in Iraq, and they're engaging with Iraq in a constructive way. A neighbors ministerial in May, also attended by the P5 and the G–8, has been followed by meetings of working groups on border security, refugees, and energy. An ambassadorial-level meeting just took place in Baghdad, and another neighbors ministerial will be held in Istanbul at the end of October, as Senator Lugar notes. And it is also worth noting that, at that ambassadorial meeting, just 2 days ago, one of the items under discussion was the establishment of a permanent standing secretariat for the neighbors, to allow precisely the kind of continuity that I think you were referring to, sir.

Iraq is now exporting oil through its neighbor, Turkey, as well as through the gulf. Iraq and Kuwait are nearing conclusion on a commercial deal for Kuwait to supply its northern neighbor with critically needed diesel. Jordan recently issued a statement welcoming the recent leaders' communiqué and supporting Iraqi efforts at reconciliation. And Saudi Arabia is planning on opening an embassy in Baghdad, its first since the fall of Saddam.

Syria's role has been more problematic. On one hand, Syria hosts over a million Iraqi refugees and hosted the Border Security Working Group meeting last month. Syria has also interdicted some foreign terrorists seeking to transit to Iraq. On the other hand, suicide bombers continue to cross the border from Syria to murder Iraqi civilians.

Iran has actively undermined Iraqi stability by providing funding, training, and munitions to extremist militias that attack Iraqis as well as coalition forces.

Whether Iraq reaches its potential is, of course, ultimately the product of Iraqi actions, but the changes in our strategy last January—the surge—have helped change the dynamics in Iraq for the better. The involvement and support of the United States will continue to be hugely important in shaping a positive outcome. Our country has given a great deal in blood and treasure to stabilize the situation in Iraq and help Iraqis build institutions for a united democratic country governed under the rule of law. They have not yet realized this vision, and to do so will take more time and patience on the part of the United States.

I cannot guarantee success in Iraq. The challenges, as I have stated, are immense. I do believe, as I have described, that success is attainable. I am certain that abandoning or drastically curtailing our efforts will bring failure, and the consequences of such a failure must be clearly understood. An Iraq that falls into chaos or civil war will mean massive human suffering, well beyond what has already occurred within Iraq's borders. It could well invite the intervention of regional states, all of which see their future connected to Iraq's in some fundamental way. Undoubtedly, Iran would be a winner in such a scenario, consolidating its influence over Iraqi resources and, possibly, territory. The Iranian President has already announced that Iran will fill any vacuum in Iraq. In such an environment, the gains made against al-Qaeda and other extremist groups could easily evaporate, and they could establish strongholds to be used as safe havens for regional and international operations. Our current course is hard. The alternatives are far worse.

Every strategy requires constant recalibration. This is particularly true in an environment like Iraq, where change is a daily occurrence. As chief of mission in Iraq, I am constantly assessing our efforts and seeking to ensure that they are coordinated with, and complementary to, the efforts of our military. I believe that, thanks to the support of Congress, we have an appropriate civilian posture in Iraq. Over the coming year, we will continue to increase our civilian efforts outside of Baghdad and the international zone. In the course of 2007, we have increased the number of our Provincial Reconstruction Teams, for example, from 10 to 25. This presence has allowed us to focus on capacity-building, especially in the provinces, and the provinces are likely to grow in influence as more power devolves from Baghdad.

We will continue our efforts to assist Iraqis in the pursuit of national reconciliation, while recognizing that progress on this front may come in many forms, and must ultimately be done by Iraqis themselves.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Crocker follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. RYAN C. CROCKER, U.S. AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF IRAQ, STATE DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON, DC

INTRODUCTION

Chairman, Senator Lugar, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to address the Senate this week. I have considered it a privilege and an honor to serve in Iraq at a time when so much is at stake for our country and the people of the region—and when so many Americans of the highest caliber in our military and civilian services are doing the same. I know that a heavy responsibility weighs on my shoulders to provide the country with my best, most honest assessment of the political, economic, and diplomatic situation in Iraq and the implications for the United States.

Americans, in this Chamber and beyond, are looking for more than an update on the latest events. They want to know the answers to some key questions. Are our objectives realistic? Is it possible that Iraq will become a united, stable country with a democratic government operating under the rule of law? What is the trajectory—is Iraq, on the whole, moving in the right direction? Can we expect more and under what timeframe? Are there alternative courses of action for our country which are superior?

These are sensible questions to be asked by a nation investing in and sacrificing for another country and people. In asking these questions, however, we must not lose sight of the vital interests the United States has in a successful outcome in Iraq.

My intention today is to give you an assessment of political, economic, and diplomatic developments in Iraq. In doing so, I will not minimize the enormity of the challenges faced by Iraqis, nor the complexity of the situation. Yet at the same time, I intend to demonstrate that it is possible for the United States to see its goals realized in Iraq and that Iraqis are capable of tackling and addressing the problems confronting them today. A secure, stable democratic Iraq at peace with its neighbors is attainable. In my judgment, the cumulative trajectory of political, economic, and diplomatic developments in Iraq is upward, although the scope of that line is not steep. The process will not be quick, it will be uneven, punctuated by setbacks as well as achievements, and it will require substantial U.S. resolve and commitment. There will be no single moment at which we can claim victory; any turning point will likely only be recognized in retrospect.

This is a sober assessment, but it should not be a disheartening one. I have found it helpful, during my time in Iraq to reflect on our own history. At many points in the early years, our survival as a nation was questionable. Our efforts to build the institutions of government were not always successful in the first instance. And tough issues—such as slavery, universal suffrage, civil rights, and state rights—were resolved only after acrimonious debate and sometimes violence.

Iraq is experiencing a revolution—not just regime change. It is only by understanding this that we can appreciate what is happening in Iraq and what Iraqis have achieved, as well as maintain a sense of realism about the challenges that remain.

CONTEXT

Evaluating where Iraqis are today only makes sense in the context of where they have been. Any Iraqi under 40 years old—and that is the overwhelming majority of the population—would have known nothing but the rule of the Baath Party before liberation 4½ years ago. Those 35 years were filled with crimes against humanity on every scale. Saddam Hussein ruled without mercy, not hesitating to use lethal force and torture against even those in his inner circle. His genocidal campaign against the Kurds and savagery toward southern Shia are well known. But he also used violence and intimidation as tools in the complete deconstruction of Iraqi society. No organization or institution survived that was not linked in some way to regime protection. He created a pervasive climate of fear in which even family members were afraid to talk to one another.

This is the legacy that Iraqis had as their history when Saddam's statue came down on April 9, 2003. No Nelson Mandela existed to emerge on the national political scene; anyone with his leadership talents would have not survived. A new Iraq had to be built almost literally from scratch, and the builders in most cases were themselves reduced to their most basic identity, ethnic or sectarian.

Much progress has been made, particularly in building an institutional framework where there was none before. But rather than being a period in which old animosities and suspicions were overcome, the past 18 months in particular have further strained Iraqi society. The sectarian violence of 2006 and early 2007 had its seeds in Saddam's social deconstruction and it had dire consequences for the people of Iraq as well as its politics. Extensive displacement and widespread sectarian killings by al-Qaeda and other extremist groups have gnawed away at the already frayed fabric of Iraqi society and politics. It is no exaggeration to say that Iraq is—and will remain for some time to come—a traumatized society.

NATIONAL POLITICS

It is against this backdrop that developments in Iraq must be seen. Iraqis are facing some of the most profound political, economic, and security challenges imaginable. They are not simply grappling with the issue of who rules Iraq—but they are asking what kind of country Iraq will be, how it will be governed, and how Iraqis will share power and resources among each other. The constitution approved in a referendum in 2005 answered some of these questions in theory, but much remains uncertain in both law and practice.

Some of the more promising political developments at the national level are neither measured in benchmarks nor visible to those far from Baghdad. For instance, there is a budding debate about federalism among Iraq's leaders and, importantly, within the Sunni community. Those living in place like Al Anbar and Salahaddin are beginning to realize how localities having more of a say in daily decisionmaking will empower their communities. No longer is an all-powerful Baghdad seen as the panacea to Iraq's problems. This thinking is nascent, but it is ultimately critical to the evolution of a common vision among all Iraqi leaders.

Similarly, there is a palpable frustration in Baghdad over the sectarian system that was used to divide the spoils of the state in the last few years. Leaders from all communities openly acknowledge that a focus on sectarian gains has led to poor governance and served Iraqis badly. And many claim to be ready to make the sacrifices that will be needed to put government performance ahead of sectarian and ethnic concerns. Such ideas are no longer controversial, although their application will be.

Finally, we are seeing Iraqis come to terms with complex issues not by first providing a national framework, but instead by tackling immediate problems. One such example is how the central government has accepted over 1,700 young men from the Abu Ghurayb area west of Baghdad, including former members of insurgent groups, to be part of the Iraqi security forces. Another is how the government, without much public fanfare, has contacted thousands of members of the former Iraqi Army, offering them retirement, return to the military, or public sector employment. So without the proclamation of a general amnesty, we see amnesty being granted, and de-Baathification reform in advance of national legislation. In both instances, the seeds of reconciliation are being planted.

We have come to associate progress on national reconciliation as meaning the passage of key pieces of legislation. There is logic to this, as the legislation we are urging the Iraqis to produce does—in one way or another—have to do with the question of how to share power and resources among Iraq's many communities. This legislation also has to do with the vision of the future Iraqi state. The oil and revenues-sharing laws, for instance, deal with deeper issues than simply whether Iraqis in oil producing areas are willing to share their wealth with other Iraqis. What is difficult about the oil laws is that they take Iraq another step down the road toward a federal system that all Iraqis have not yet embraced. But once again, we see that even in the absence of legislation there is practical action as the central government shares oil revenues through budget allocations on an equitable basis with Iraq's provinces.

In many respects, the debates currently occurring in Iraq—de-Baathification and provincial powers—are akin to those surrounding our civil rights movement or struggle over states rights. On de-Baathification, Iraqis are struggling to come to terms with a vicious past. They are trying to balance fear that the Baath Party would one day return to power with the recognition that many former members of the party are guilty of no crime and joined the organization not to repress others but for personal survival. With provincial powers, they are grappling with very serious questions about what the right balance between the center and the periphery is for Iraq. Some see the devolution of power to regions and provinces as being the best insurance against the rise of a future tyrannical figure in Baghdad. Others see Iraq, with its complex demographics, as in need of a strong central authority.

In short, we should not be surprised or dismayed that Iraqis have not fully resolved such issues. Rather, we should ask whether the way in which they are approaching such issues gives us a sense of their seriousness and ultimate capability to resolve Iraq's fundamental problems. Is the collective national leadership of Iraq ready to prioritize Iraq over sectarian and community interests? Can and will they come to agreement about what sort of Iraq they want?

I do believe that Iraq's leaders have the will to tackle the country's pressing problems, although it will take longer than we originally anticipated because of the environment and the gravity of the issues before them. Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and the other Iraqi leaders face enormous obstacles in their efforts to govern effectively. I believe they approach the task with a deep sense of commitment and patriotism. An important part of my assessment was the effort made by the leaders this past summer. After weeks of preparatory work and many days of intensive meetings, Iraq's five most prominent national leaders from the three major communities issued a communiqué on August 26 that noted agreement on draft legislation dealing with de-Baathification and provincial powers. This agreement by no means solves all of Iraq's problems. But the commitment of its leaders to work together on hard issues is encouraging.

Perhaps most significantly, these five Iraqi leaders together decided to publicly express their joint desire to develop a long-term relationship with the United States. Despite their many differences in perspectives and experiences, they all agreed on language acknowledging the need for a continued presence by the multinational forces in Iraq and expressing gratitude for the sacrifices these forces have made for Iraqis.

PROVINCIAL AND LOCAL POLITICS

At the provincial level, political gains have been more pronounced, particularly in the north and west of Iraq where the security improvements have been in some places dramatic. In these areas, there is abundant evidence that the security gains have opened the door for meaningful politics.

In Al Anbar, the progress on the security side has been extraordinary. Six months ago, violence was rampant, our forces were under daily attack, and Iraqis were cowering from the intimidation of al-Qaeda. But al-Qaeda overplayed its hand in Al Anbar and Anbaris began to reject its excesses—be they beheading school children or cutting off peoples' fingers as punishment for smoking. Recognizing the coalition would help eject al-Qaeda, the tribes began to fight with us, not against us, and the landscape in Al Anbar is dramatically different as a result. Tribal representatives are on the provincial council, which is now meeting regularly to find ways of restoring services, developing the economy, and executing a provincial budget. These leaders are looking for help to rebuild their cities and talking of attracting investment. Such scenes are also unfolding in parts of Diyala and Ninawa, where Iraqis have mobilized with the help of the coalition and Iraqi security forces to evict al-Qaeda from their communities. The world should note that when al-Qaeda began implementing its twisted vision of the Caliphate in Iraq, Iraqis, from Al Anbar to Baghdad to Diyala, have overwhelmingly rejected it.

Shia extremists are also facing rejection. Recent attacks by elements of the Iranian-backed Jaysh al-Mahdi on worshipers in the holy city of Karbala have provoked a backlash and triggered a call by Moqtada al-Sadr for Jaysh al-Mahdi to cease attacks against Iraqis and coalition forces.

A key challenge for Iraqis now is to link these positive developments in the provinces to the central government in Baghdad. Unlike our states, Iraqi provinces have little ability to generate funds through taxation, making them dependent on the central government for resources. The growing ability of the provinces to design and execute budgets and the readiness of the central government to resource them are success stories. On September 6, Iraq's senior federal leadership traveled to Al Anbar where they announced a 70-percent increase in the 2007 provincial capital budget as well as $50 million to compensate losses in the fight against al-Qaeda. The support of the central government is also needed to maintain hard-won security in areas like Al Anbar through the rapid expansion of locally generated police. The Government of Iraq has placed some 21,000 Anbaris on police roles.

ECONOMICS AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Iraq is starting to make some gains in the economy. Improving security is stimulating revival of markets, with the active participation of local communities. In some places, war damage is being cleared and buildings repaired, roads and sewers built, and commerce energized.

The IMF estimates that economic growth will exceed 6 percent for 2007. Iraqi ministries and provincial councils have made substantial progress this year in utilizing Iraq's oil revenue for investment. The 2007 governmental budget allocated $10 billion (nearly one-third Iraq's expected oil export revenue) to capital investment. Over $3 billion was allocated to the provinces and the Kurdish Region for spending. The latest data show that spending units (national ministries and provincial councils) have proceeded to commit these funds at more than twice the rate of last year. Doing the best are the provincial authorities, in the process gaining experience with making plans and decisions, and running fair tenders. In so doing, they are stimulating local business development and providing employment. Over time we expect the experience with more responsive local authorities will change Iraqi attitudes toward their elected leaders, and of the provinces toward Baghdad.

At two conferences in Dubai in the last 2 weeks, hundreds of Iraqi businessmen met an equal number of foreign investors newly interested in acquiring shares of businesses in Iraq. An auction of cell phone spectrum conducted by Pricewaterhouse Coopers netted the Government a better-than-expected sum of $3.75 billion. The Minister of Finance plans to use the funds, along with all the country's oil revenue, to apply to its pressing investment and current expenditure needs.

Overall, however, the Iraqi economy is performing significantly under potential. A lack of security in many parts of the countryside raises transport costs and especially affects manufacturing and agriculture. Electricity supply has improved in many parts of the country, but is woefully inadequate in Baghdad. Many neighborhoods in the city receive 2 hours a day or less from the national grid, although power supplies for essential services such as water pumping stations or hospitals are much better. The Minister of Electricity said last week that it would take $25 billion through 2016 to meet demand requirements, but that by investing the $2 bil-

lion a year the Ministry is now receiving from the government's budget, as well as private investment in power generation, that goal could be met.

We are deploying our assistance funds to make a difference to ordinary Iraqis and to support our political objectives. Military units are using Commanders Emergency Response (CERP) funds to ensure that residents see a difference when neighborhood violence declines. USAID Community Stabilization Funds provide tens of thousands of jobs. With the recent apportionment of 2007 Supplemental funds, we are putting "Quick Response Funds" in the hands of our Provincial Reconstruction Team leaders to build communities and institutions in post-kinetic environments. Vocational training and microfinance programs are supporting nascent private businesses. And in Baghdad, we are increasing our engagement and capacity-building efforts with ministries.

REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL DYNAMICS

On the diplomatic front, there is expanding international and regional engagement with Iraq. In August, the U.N. Security Council, at Iraq's invitation, provided the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) with an expanded mandate through UNSCR 1770. The work of the International Compact with Iraq moves forward, jointly chaired by Iraq and the U.N. Seventy-four countries pledged support for Iraq's economic reform efforts at a Ministerial Conference in May. The U.N. has reported progress in 75 percent of the 400 areas Iraq has identified for action. Later this month, the Iraqi Prime Minister and the U.N. Secretary General will chair a ministerial-level meeting in New York to discuss further progress under the Compact and how UNSCR 1770 can be most effectively implemented.

Many of Iraq's neighbors recognize that they have a stake in the outcome of the current conflict in Iraq, and are engaging with Iraq in a constructive way. A neighbors' ministerial in May, also attended by the P–5 and the G–8, has been followed by meetings of working groups on security, border issues, and energy. An ambassadorial level meeting just took place in Baghdad, and another neighbors' ministerial will be held in Istanbul in October.

Against the backdrop of these new mechanisms, the business of being neighbors is quietly unfolding. For the first time in years, Iraq is exporting oil through its neighbor, Turkey, as well as through the gulf. Iraq and Kuwait are nearing conclusion on a commercial deal for Kuwait to supply its northern neighbor with critically needed diesel. Jordan recently issued a statement welcoming the recent leaders' communiqué and supporting Iraqi efforts at reconciliation. And Saudi Arabia is planning on opening an Embassy in Baghdad—its first since the fall of Saddam.

Syria's role has been more problematic. On one hand, Syria has hosted a meeting of the border security working group and interdicted some foreign terrorists in transit to Iraq. On the other hand, suicide-bombers continue to cross the border from Syria to murder Iraqi civilians.

Iran plays a harmful role in Iraq. While claiming to support Iraq in its transition, Iran has actively undermined it by providing lethal capabilities to the enemies of the Iraqi state. In doing so, the Iranian Government seems to ignore the risks that an unstable Iraq carries for its own interests.

LOOKING AHEAD

Two thousand six was a bad year in Iraq. The country came close to unraveling politically, economically, and in security terms; 2007 has brought some improvements. Enormous challenges remain. Iraqis still struggle with fundamental questions about how to share power, accept their differences and overcome their past. The changes to our strategy last January—the Surge—have helped change the dynamics in Iraq for the better. Our increased presence made besieged communities feel that they could defeat al-Qaeda by working with us. Our population security measures have made it much harder for terrorists to conduct attacks. We have given Iraqis the time and space to reflect on what sort of country they want. Most Iraqis genuinely accept Iraq as a multiethnic, multisectarian society—it is the balance of power that has yet to be sorted out.

Whether Iraq reaches its potential is of course ultimately the product of Iraqi decisions. But the involvement and support of the United States will be hugely important in shaping a positive outcome. Our country has given a great deal in blood and treasure to stabilize the situation in Iraq and help Iraqis build institutions for a united, democratic country governed under the rule of law. Realizing this vision will take more time and patience on the part of the United States.

I cannot guarantee success in Iraq. I do believe, as I have described, that it is attainable. I am certain that abandoning or drastically curtailing our efforts will bring failure, and the consequences of such a failure must be clearly understood. An

Iraq that falls into chaos or civil war will mean massive human suffering—well beyond what has already occurred within Iraq's borders. It could well invite the intervention of regional states, all of which see their future connected to Iraq's in some fundamental way. Undoubtedly, Iran would be a winner in this scenario, consolidating its influence over Iraqi resources and possibly territory. The Iranian President has already announced that Iran will fill any vacuum in Iraq. In such an environment, the gains made against al-Qaeda and other extremists groups could easily evaporate and they could establish strongholds to be used as safehavens for regional and international operations. Our current course is hard. The alternatives are far worse.

Every strategy requires recalibration as time goes on. This is particularly true in an environment like Iraq where change is a daily or hourly occurrence. As chief of mission in Iraq, I am constantly assessing our efforts and seeking to ensure that they are coordinated with and complementary to the efforts of our military. I believe that, thanks to the support of Congress, we have an appropriate civilian posture in Iraq. Over the coming year, we will continue to increase our civilian efforts outside of Baghdad and the international zone. This presence has allowed us to focus on capacity-building, especially in the provinces. The number of Provincial Reconstruction Teams has grown from 10 to 25 this year. In support of these goals, we will be asking Congress for additional economic assistance including additional quick response funds for capacity-building. We will also seek support for two significant proposals that hold the prospect of creating permanent jobs for thousands of Iraqis. One would be the establishment of an "Iraqi-American Enterprise Fund," modeled on our successful funds in Poland and elsewhere in Central Europe. Such a fund could make equity investments in new and revamped firms based in Iraq. The second would be a large-scale operations and maintenance facility based on our Highway Trust Fund. On a cost-sharing basis, such a fund would train Iraqis to budget for and maintain important public sector infrastructure (power plants, dams, roads). Over time, the cost-sharing would phase down and out, leaving behind well-trained professionals and instilling the habits of preventative maintenance.

We will continue our efforts to assist Iraqis in the pursuit of national reconciliation, while recognizing that progress on this front may come in many forms and must ultimately be done by Iraqis themselves. We will seek additional ways to neutralize regional interference and enhance regional and international support. And we will help Iraqis consolidate the positive developments at local levels and connect them with the national government. Finally, I expect we will invest much effort in developing the strategic partnership between the United States and Iraq, which is an investment in the future of both countries.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

General.

The committee will—the police will clear the——

[Pause.]

The CHAIRMAN. General.

STATEMENT OF GEN DAVID H. PETRAEUS, USA, COMMANDER, MULTINATIONAL FORCE–IRAQ, BAGHDAD, IRAQ

General PETRAEUS. Mr. Chairman, Senator Lugar, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide my assessment of the security situation in Iraq and to discuss the recommendations I have provided to my chain of command for the way forward.

As I stated in testimony to the two House committees yesterday, this is my testimony. Although I have briefed my assessment and recommendations to my chain of command, I wrote this myself, and did not clear it with anyone in the Pentagon, the White House, or Congress.

Today, I will provide a summary of the full written testimony I have provided to each of you and for the record.

As a bottom line up front, the military objectives of the surge are, in large measure, being met. In recent months, in the face of tough enemies in the brutal summer heat of Iraq, coalition and

Iraqi security forces have achieved progress in the security arena. Though improvements have been uneven across Iraq, the overall number of security incidents in Iraq, for example, has declined in 8 of the past 12 weeks. During this time, ethnosectarian violence has also been reduced, and the number of overall civilian deaths has declined, though both are clearly still at troubling levels.

The progress is a result of many factors. Coalition and Iraqi forces have dealt significant blows to al-Qaeda–Iraq, and have disrupted Shia militia extremists. Additionally, in a very significant development, we and our Iraqi partners are being assisted by tribes and local citizens who are rejecting extremism and choosing to help secure Iraq. Iraqi security forces have also continued to grow and to shoulder more of the load, albeit slowly and amid continuing concerns about the sectarian tendencies of some elements in their ranks.

Based on all this and on the further progress we believe we can achieve over the next few months, I believe that we will be able to reduce our forces to the presurge level of Brigade Combat Teams by next summer, withdrawing one-quarter of our combat brigades by that time, without jeopardizing the security gains that we have fought so hard to achieve.

Beyond that, while noting that the situation in Iraq remains complex, difficult, and sometimes downright frustrating, I also believe that it is possible for us to achieve our objectives in Iraq over time, though doing so will be neither quick nor easy.

Having provided that summary, I would like to review, briefly, the nature of the conflict in Iraq, recall the situation before the surge, describe the current situation, and explain the recommendations I have provided to my chain of command.

The fundamental source of the conflict in Iraq is competition among ethnic and sectarian communities for power and resources. This competition will take place. The question is whether it is resolved more or less violently.

This chart shows the security challenges in Iraq. And you have charts in front of you, as well. Foreign and homegrown terrorists, insurgents, militia extremists, and criminals all push the ethnosectarian competition toward violence. Malign actions by Syria, and especially by Iran, fuel the violence. And lack of adequate governmental capacity, lingering sectarian mistrust, and various forms of corruption add to the challenges.

In January 2007, in response to the horrific ethnosectarian violence that spiraled out of control in 2006, and to an assessment in December 2006, that we were failing to achieve our objectives, a surge of forces began flowing into Iraq, focusing on protecting the population and reducing sectarian violence, especially in Baghdad.

In so doing, these forces have employed counterinsurgency practices, such as living among the people they are securing. In mid-June, with all the surge brigades in place, we launched a series of offensive operations, in partnership with Iraqi security forces. These operations focused on expanding the gains achieved in the preceding months in Anbar province, pursuing al-Qaeda in the Diyala River Valley and several other areas, and clearing Baqubah, several key Baghdad neighborhoods, the remaining sanctuaries in Anbar province and important areas around Baghdad. And, with

coalition and Iraqi forces located among the populations they are securing, we have sought to keep areas clear and to help Iraqis in rebuilding them. All the while, we have engaged in dialog with insurgent groups and tribes, leading to additional elements standing up to oppose al-Qaeda and other extremists.

The progress our forces have achieved with our Iraqi counterparts has, as I noted at the outset, been substantial. While there have been setbacks, as well as successes, and tough losses along the way, overall our tactical commanders see improvements in the security environment.

We do not, however, just rely on gut feel or personal observations. To gauge progress and determine trends, we also conduct rigorous, consistent data collection and analysis. In fact, two U.S. intelligence agencies recently reviewed our methodology and concluded that the data we produce is the most accurate and authoritative in Iraq.

As I mentioned up front, and as the chart before you reflects, the level of security incidence has decreased significantly since the start of the surge of offensive operations in mid-June, declining in 8 of the past 12 weeks, with the level of incidence in the past 2 weeks the lowest since June 2006. Civilian deaths of all categories, less natural causes, have also declined considerably, by over 45 percent Iraqwide, since the height of the sectarian violence in December. This is shown by the top line on this next chart. And the decline by some 70 percent in Baghdad is shown by the bottom line. Periodic mass-casualty attacks, car bombings by al-Qaeda, have, tragically, added to the numbers outside Baghdad, in particular. Even without the sensational attacks, however, the level of civilian deaths is of serious concern.

As the next chart shows, the number of ethnosectarian deaths, an important subset of the overall civilian casualty figures, has also declined significantly since the height of the sectarian violence in December. Iraqwide, as shown by the top line on this chart, ethnosectarian deaths have come down by over 55 percent. In Baghdad, as the bottom line shows, ethnosectarian deaths have declined by some 80 percent since December. This chart also displays the density of sectarian incidents in various Baghdad neighborhoods, and it both reflects the progress made in reducing ethnosectarian violence and identifies the areas where more work must be done.

As we have gone on the offensive in former al-Qaeda and insurgent sanctuaries, and as locals have increasingly supported our efforts, we have found a substantially increased numbers of arms, ammunition, and explosive caches. As this next chart shows, we have, so far this year, already found and cleared over 4,400 caches, nearly 1,700 more than we discovered in all of last year. This may be a factor in the reduction in the overall improvised explosive device attacks in recent months, which, as this next chart shows, has declined sharply, by about one-third, since June.

The change in the security situation in Anbar province has, of course, been particularly dramatic. As this next chart shows, monthly attack levels in Anbar have declined from some 1,350 in October 2006, to a bit over 200 in August of this year. This dramatic decrease reflects the significance of the local rejection of al-

Qaeda and the new-found willingness of local Anbaris to volunteer to serve in the Iraqi Army and Iraqi police services.

To be sure, trends have not been uniformly positive across Iraq, as is shown by this next chart depicting violence levels in several key Iraqi provinces. The trend in Ninawa province, for example, has been much more up and down until a recently decline. And the same has been true in Salah al-Din province, though recent trends there, and in Baghdad, as shown, have been in the right direction. In any event, the overall trajectory in Iraq, a steady decline of incidents in the past 3 months, is still quite significant.

The number of car bombings and suicide attacks has also declined in each of the past 5 months, from a high of some 175 in March, as this next chart shows, to about 90 this past month. While this trend has been heartening, the number of high-profile attacks is clearly still too high, and we continue to work hard to destroy the networks, with our Iraqi counterparts, that carry out these barbaric attacks.

Our operations have produced substantial progress against al-Qaeda in Iraq. As this next chart shows, in the past 8 months we have considerably reduced the areas in which al-Qaeda enjoyed sanctuary. We have also neutralized five important media cells, detained the senior Iraqi leader of al-Qaeda–Iraq, and killed or captured nearly 100 other key leaders and some 2,500 rank-and-file fighters. Al-Qaeda–Iraq is certainly not defeated; however, it is off balance, and we are pursuing its leaders and operators aggressively.

Of note, these gains against al-Qaeda are a result of the synergy of actions by conventional forces; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets; and special-operations elements. A combination of these assets is necessary to conduct effective operations against terrorist elements.

In the past 6 months, we have also targeted Shia militia extremists, killing or capturing over 1,400 rank-and-file and senior leaders. It is increasingly apparent to both coalition and Iraqi leaders that Iran, through the use of the Iranian Republican Guard Corps, Quds Force, seeks to turn these Shia militia extremists into a Hezbollah-like force to serve its interests and fight a proxy war against the Iraqi state and coalition forces in Iraq.

The CHAIRMAN. We will clear the room.

[Pause.]

The CHAIRMAN. General.

General PETRAEUS. The most significant development in the past 6 months likely has been the increasing emergence of tribes and local citizens rejecting al-Qaeda and other extremists. The success in Anbar is an example of what can happen when local Iraqis decide to oppose al-Qaeda and reject its Taliban-like ideology and indiscriminate violence.

While Anbar's model cannot be replicated everywhere in Iraq, it does demonstrate the dramatic change in security that is possible with the support and participation of local citizens.

As this next chart shows, other tribes have been inspired by the actions of those in Anbar, and have volunteered to fight extremists, as well. Over 20,000 such individuals are already being hired for the Iraqi national—or the Iraqi police service. Thousands of others

are being assimilated into the Iraqi Army, and thousands more are vying for a spot in Iraq's security forces.

As I noted earlier, Iraqi security forces have continued to grow to develop their capabilities and to shoulder more of the burden of providing security for their country.

Despite concerns about sectarian influence, inadequate logistics and supporting institutions, and an insufficient number of qualified commissioned and noncommissioned officers, Iraqi units are engaged around the country. As this next chart shows, there are now nearly 140 Iraqi Army, national police, and special operations forces battalions in the fight, with about 95 of those capable of taking the lead in operations, as judged by the operational readiness assessments, albeit it with some coalition support. Although their qualitative development has not always kept pace with their quantitative growth, all of Iraq's battalions have been heavily involved in combat operations that often result in the loss of leaders, soldiers, and equipment. Despite the losses, a number of Iraqi units across Iraq now operate with minimal coalition assistance.

In order to take over the security of their country, the Iraqis are rapidly expanding their security forces. In fact, they now have some 445,000 assigned to the Ministries of Interior and Defense forces, and we believe there will be close to 480,000 by year's end.

Significantly, in 2007 Iraq will, as in 2006, spend more on its security forces than it will receive in security assistance from the United States. In fact, Iraq is becoming one of the United States larger foreign military sales customers, committing some $1.6 billion to FMS already, with the possibility of up to $1.8 billion more being committed before the end of this year. And I appreciate the attention that some Members of Congress have recently given to speeding up the FMS process for Iraq.

To summarize, the security situation in Iraq is improving, and Iraqi elements are slowly taking on more of the responsibility for protecting their citizens. Innumerable challenges lie ahead; however, coalition and Iraqi security forces have made progress toward achieving sustainable security. As a result, the United States will be in a position to reduce its forces in Iraq in the months ahead.

Two weeks ago, I provided recommendations for the way ahead in Iraq to the members of my chain of command and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The essence of the approach I recommended is captured in its title, "Security While Transitioning: From Leading to Partnering to Overwatch." This approach seeks to build on the security improvements our troopers and our Iraqi counterparts have achieved in recent months. It reflects recognition of the importance of securing the population and the imperative of transitioning responsibilities to Iraqi institutions and Iraqi forces as quickly as possible, but without rushing to failure. It includes substantial support for the continuing development of Iraqi security forces. It also stresses the need to continue the counterinsurgency strategy that we have been employing, but with Iraqis gradually shouldering more of the load. And it highlights the importance of regional and global diplomatic approaches.

Finally, in recognition of the fact that this war is not only being fought on the ground in Iraq, but also in cyberspace, it also notes

the need to contest the enemy's growing use of that important medium to spread extremism.

The recommendations I've provided were informed by operational and strategic considerations. The operational considerations include recognition that military aspects of the surge have achieved progress and generated momentum. Iraqi security forces have slowly been shouldering more of the security burden. A mission focused on either population security or transition alone will not be adequate to achieve our objectives. Success against al-Qaeda–Iraq and Iranian-supported militia extremists requires conventional forces, as well as special-operations forces. And the security and local political situations will enable us to draw down the surge forces.

My recommendations also took into account a number of strategic considerations. Political progress will only take place if sufficient security exists. Long-term U.S. ground-force viability will benefit from force reductions as the surge runs its course.

Regional, global, and cyberspace initiatives are critical to success. And Iraqi leaders, understandably, want to assume greater sovereignty in their country, although, as they recently announced, they do desire a continued presence of coalition forces in Iraq in 2008, under a new U.N. Security Council resolution, and, following that, they want to negotiate a long-term security agreement with the United States and other nations.

Based on these considerations and having worked the battlefield geometry with LTG General Ray Odierno, Commander of the Multinational Corps–Iraq, to ensure that we retain and build on the gains for which our troopers have fought, I have recommended a drawdown of the surge forces from Iraq. In fact, later this month the Marine Expeditionary Unit deployed as part of the surge will depart Iraq. Beyond that, if my recommendations are approved, this will be followed by the withdrawal of a Brigade Combat Team, without replacement, in mid-December, and the further redeployment, without replacement, of four additional Brigade Combat Teams and two Marine battalions in the first 7 months of 2008, until we reach the presurge level of 15 Brigade Combat Teams by mid-July 2008.

Force reductions will continue beyond the presurge levels of Brigade Combat Teams that we will reach by mid-July 2008. In my professional judgment, however, it would be premature to make recommendations on the pace of such reductions, at this time. In fact, our experience in Iraq has repeatedly shown that projecting too far into the future is not just difficult, it can be misleading and even hazardous. In view of this, I do not believe it is reasonable to have an adequate appreciation for the pace of further reductions and mission adjustments beyond the summer of 2008 until about mid-March of next year. We will, no later than that time, consider factors similar to those on which I base the current recommendations, having, by then, of course, a better feel for the security situation, the improvements in the capabilities of our Iraqi counterparts, and the enemy situation.

This final chart captures the recommendations I have described, showing the recommended reduction of Brigade Combat Teams and illustrating the concept of our units adjusting their missions and

transitioning responsibilities to Iraqis as the situation and Iraqi capabilities permit. It also reflects the no-later-than date for recommendations on force adjustments beyond next summer, and provides a possible approach we have considered for the future force structure and mission set in Iraq.

In describing the recommendations I have made, I should note, again, that, like Ambassador Crocker, I believe Iraq's problems will require a long-term effort. There are no easy answers or quick solutions. And, though we both believe this effort can succeed, it will take time. Our assessments underscore, in fact, the importance of recognizing that a premature drawdown of our forces would likely have devastating consequences. That assessment is supported by the findings of a 16 August Defense Intelligence Agency report on the implications of a rapid withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq. Summarizing it in an unclassified fashion, it concludes that a rapid withdrawal would result in the further release of the strong centrifugal forces in Iraq, and produce a number of dangerous results, including a high risk of disintegration of the Iraqi security forces, rapid deterioration of local security initiatives, al-Qaeda–Iraq regaining lost ground and freedom of maneuver, a marked increase in violence, and further ethnosectarian displacement and refugee flows, alliances of convenience by Iraqi groups with internal and external forces to gain advantages over their rivals, and exacerbation of already challenging regional dynamics, especially with respect to Iran.

Lieutenant General Odierno and I share this assessment and believe that the best way to secure our national interests and avoid an unfavorable outcome in Iraq is to continue to focus our operations on securing the Iraqi people while targeting terrorist groups and militia extremists, and, as quickly as conditions are met, transitioning security tasks to Iraqi elements.

Before closing, I want to thank you and your colleagues for your support of our men and women in uniform in Iraq. The soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coast guardsmen with whom I'm honored to serve are the best equipped and very likely the most professional force in our Nation's history. All of us appreciate what you have done to ensure that these great troopers have had what they've needed to accomplish their mission, just as we appreciate what you have done to take care of their families, as they, too, have made significant sacrifices in recent years.

The advances you have underwritten in weapons systems and individual equipment, in munitions, in command, control, and communications systems, in intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities, in vehicles, in counter-IED systems and programs, and in manned and unmanned aircraft have proven invaluable in Iraq. Additionally, your funding of the Commanders Emergency Response Program has given our leaders a critical tool with which to prosecute the counterinsurgency campaign. Finally, we appreciate, as well, your funding of our new detention programs and rule-of-law initiatives.

In closing, it remains an enormous privilege to soldier again in Iraq with America's new "Greatest Generation." Our country's men and women in uniform have done a magnificent job in the most complex and challenging environment imaginable. All Americans

should be very proud of their sons and daughters serving in Iraq today.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of General Petraeus follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GEN DAVID H. PETRAEUS, COMMANDER, MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE–IRAQ, BAGHDAD, IRAQ

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide my assessment of the security situation in Iraq and to discuss the recommendations I recently provided to my chain of command for the way forward.

At the outset, I would like to note that this is my testimony. Although I have briefed my assessment and recommendations to my chain of command, I wrote this testimony myself. It has not been cleared by, nor shared with, anyone in the Pentagon, the White House, or Congress.

As a bottom line up front, the military objectives of the surge are, in large measure, being met. In recent months, in the face of tough enemies and the brutal summer heat of Iraq, coalition and Iraqi security forces have achieved progress in the security arena. Though the improvements have been uneven across Iraq, the overall number of security incidents in Iraq has declined in 8 of the past 12 weeks, with the numbers of incidents in the last 2 weeks at the lowest levels seen since June 2006.

One reason for the decline in incidents is that coalition and Iraqi forces have dealt significant blows to al-Qaeda–Iraq. Though al-Qaeda and its affiliates in Iraq remain dangerous, we have taken away a number of their sanctuaries and gained the initiative in many areas.

We have also disrupted Shia militia extremists, capturing the head and numerous other leaders the Iranian-supported Special Groups, along with a senior Lebanese Hezbollah operative supporting Iran's activities in Iraq.

Coalition and Iraqi operations have helped reduce ethnosectarian violence, as well, bringing down the number of ethnosectarian deaths substantially in Baghdad and across Iraq since the height of the sectarian violence last December. The number of overall civilian deaths has also declined during this period, although the numbers in each area are still at troubling levels.

Iraqi security forces have also continued to grow and to shoulder more of the load, albeit slowly and amid continuing concerns about the sectarian tendencies of some elements in their ranks. In general, however, Iraqi elements have been standing and fighting and sustaining tough losses, and they have taken the lead in operations in many areas.

Additionally, in what may be the most significant development of the past 8 months, the tribal rejection of al-Qaeda that started in Anbar province and helped produce such significant change there has now spread to a number of other locations as well.

Based on all this and on the further progress we believe we can achieve over the next few months, I believe that we will be able to reduce our forces to the presurge level of brigade combat teams by next summer without jeopardizing the security gains that we have fought so hard to achieve.

Beyond that, while noting that the situation in Iraq remains complex, difficult, and sometimes downright frustrating, I also believe that it is possible to achieve our objectives in Iraq over time, though doing so will be neither quick nor easy.

Having provided that summary, I would like to review the nature of the conflict in Iraq, recall the situation before the surge, describe the current situation, and explain the recommendations I have provided to my chain of command for the way ahead in Iraq.

THE NATURE OF THE CONFLICT

The fundameintal source of the conflict in Iraq is competition among ethnic and sectarian communities for power and resources. This competition will take place, and its resolution is key to producing long-term stability in the new Iraq. The question is whether the competition takes place more—or less—violently. This chart shows the security challenges in Iraq. Foreign and home-grown terrorists, insurgents, militia extremists, and criminals all push the ethno-sectarian competition toward violence. Malign actions by Syria and, especially, by Iran fuel that violence. Lack of adequate governmental capacity, lingering sectarian mistrust, and various forms of corruption add to Iraq's challenges.

THE SITUATION IN DECEMBER 2006 AND THE SURGE

In our recent efforts to look to the future, we found it useful to revisit the past. In December 2006, during the height of the ethnosectarian violence that escalated in the wake of the bombing of the Golden Dome Mosque in Samara, the leaders in Iraq at that time—General George Casey and Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad—concluded that the coalition was failing to achieve its objectives. Their review underscored the need to protect the population and reduce sectarian violence, especially in Baghdad. As a result, General Casey requested additional forces to enable the coalition to accomplish these tasks, and those forces began to flow in January.

In the ensuing months, our forces and our Iraqi counterparts have focused on improving security, especially in Baghdad and the areas around it, wresting sanctuaries from al-Qaeda control, and disrupting the efforts of the Iranian-supported militia extremists. We have employed counterinsurgency practices that underscore the importance of units living among the people they are securing, and accordingly, our forces have established dozens of joint security stations and patrol bases manned by coalition and Iraqi forces in Baghdad and in other areas across Iraq.

In mid-June, with all the surge brigades in place, we launched a series of offensive operations focused on: Expanding the gains achieved in the preceding months in Anbar province; clearing Baqubah, several key Baghdad neighborhoods, the remaining sanctuaries in Anbar province, and important areas in the so-called "belts" around Baghdad; and pursuing al-Qaeda in the Diyala River Valley and several other areas.

Throughout this period, as well, we engaged in dialogue with insurgent groups and tribes, and this led to additional elements standing up to oppose al-Qaeda and other extremists. We also continued to emphasize the development of the Iraqi security forces and we employed nonkinetic means to exploit the opportunities provided by the conduct of our kinetic operations aided in this effort by the arrival of additional Provincial Reconstruction Teams.

CURRENT SITUATION AND TRENDS

The progress our forces have achieved with our Iraqi counterparts has, as I noted at the outset, been substantial. While there have been setbacks as well as successes and tough losses along the way; overall, our tactical commanders and I see improvements in the security environment. We do not, however, just rely on gut feel or personal observations; we also conduct considerable data collection and analysis to gauge progress and determine trends. We do this by gathering and refining data from coalition and Iraqi operations centers, using a methodology that has been in place for well over a year and that has benefited over the past 7 months from the increased presence of our forces living among the Iraqi people. We endeavor to ensure our analysis of that data is conducted with rigor and consistency, as our ability to achieve a nuanced understanding of the security environment is dependent on collecting and analyzing data in a consistent way over time. Two U.S. intelligence agencies recently reviewed our methodology, and they concluded that the data we produce is the most accurate and authoritative in Iraq.

As I mentioned up front, and as the chart before you reflects, the level of security incidents has decreased significantly since the start of the surge of offensive operations in mid-June, declining in 8 of the past 12 weeks, with the level of incidents in the past 2 weeks the lowest since June 2006 and with the number of attacks this past week the lowest since April 2006.

Civilian deaths of all categories, less natural causes, have also declined considerably, by over 45 percent Iraq-wide since the height of the sectarian violence in December. This is shown by the top line on this chart, and the decline by some 70 percent in Baghdad is shown by the bottom line. Periodic mass casualty attacks by al-Qaeda have tragically added to the numbers outside Baghdad, in particular. Even without the sensational attacks, however, the level of civilian deaths is clearly still too high and continues to be of serious concern.

As the next chart shows, the number of ethnosectarian deaths, an important subset of the overall civilian casualty figures, has also declined significantly since the height of the sectarian violence in December. Iraq-wide, as shown by the top line on this chart, the number of ethnosectarian deaths has come down by over 55 percent, and it would have come down much further were it not for the casualties inflicted by barbaric al-Qaeda bombings attempting to reignite sectarian violence. In Baghdad, as the bottom line shows, the number of ethnosectarian deaths has come down by some 80 percent since December. This chart also displays the density of sectarian incidents in various Baghdad neighborhoods and it both reflects the progress made in reducing ethnosectarian violence in the Iraqi capital and identifies the areas that remain the most challenging.

As we have gone on the offensive in former al-Qaeda and insurgent sanctuaries, and as locals have increasingly supported our efforts, we have found a substantially increased number of arms, ammunition, and explosives caches. As this chart shows, we have, so far this year, already found and cleared over 4,400 caches, nearly 1,700 more than we discovered in all of last year. This may be a factor in the reduction in the number of overall improvised explosive device attacks in recent months, which as this chart shows, has declined sharply, by about one-third, since June.

The change in the security situation in Anbar province has, of course, been particularly dramatic. As this chart shows, monthly attack levels in Anbar have declined from some 1,350 in October 2006 to a bit over 200 in August of this year. This dramatic decrease reflects the significance of the local rejection of al-Qaeda and the newfound willingness of local Anbaris to volunteer to serve in the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police Service. As I noted earlier, we are seeing similar actions in other locations, as well.

To be sure, trends have not been uniformly positive across Iraq, as is shown by this chart depicting violence levels in several key Iraqi provinces. The trend in Nineveh province, for example, has been much more up and down, until a recent decline, and the same is true in Salah ad-Din province, though recent trends there and in Baghdad have been in the right direction. In any event, the overall trajectory in Iraq—a steady decline of incidents in the past 3 months—is still quite significant.

The number of car bombings and suicide attacks has also declined in each of the past 5 months, from a high of some 175 in March, as this chart shows, to about 90 this past month. While this trend in recent months has been heartening, the number of high profile attacks is still too high, and we continue to work hard to destroy the networks that carry out these barbaric attacks.

Our operations have, in fact, produced substantial progress against al-Qaeda and its affiliates in Iraq. As this chart shows, in the past 8 months, we have considerably reduced the areas in which al-Qaeda enjoyed sanctuary. We have also neutralized 5 media cells, detained the senior Iraqi leader of al-Qaeda–Iraq, and killed or captured nearly 100 other key leaders and some 2,500 rank-and-file fighters. Al-Qaeda is certainly not defeated; however, it is off balance and we are pursuing its leaders and operators aggressively. Of note, as the recent National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq explained, these gains against al-Qaeda are a result of the synergy of actions by: Conventional forces to deny the terrorists sanctuary; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets to find the enemy; and special operations elements to conduct targeted raids. A combination of these assets is necessary to prevent the creation of a terrorist safe haven in Iraq.

In the past 6 months we have also targeted Shia militia extremists, capturing a number of senior leaders and fighters, as well as the deputy commander of Lebanese Hezbollah Department 2800, the organization created to support the training, arming, funding, and, in some cases, direction of the militia extremists by the Iranian Republican Guard Corps' Quds Force. These elements have assassinated and kidnapped Iraqi governmental leaders, killed and wounded our soldiers with advanced explosive devices provided by Iran, and indiscriminately rocketed civilians in the International Zone and elsewhere. It is increasingly apparent to both coalition and Iraqi leaders that Iran, through the use of the Quds Force, seeks to turn the Iraqi Special Groups into a Hezbollah-like force to serve its interests and fight a proxy war against the Iraqi state and coalition forces in Iraq.

The most significant development in the past 6 months likely has been the increasing emergence of tribes and local citizens rejecting al-Qaeda and other extremists. This has, of course, been most visible in Anbar province. A year ago the province was assessed as "lost" politically. Today, it is a model of what happens when local leaders and citizens decide to oppose al-Qaeda and reject its Taliban-like ideology. While Anbar is unique and the model it provides cannot be replicated everywhere in Iraq, it does demonstrate the dramatic change in security that is possible with the support and participation of local citizens. As this chart shows, other tribes have been inspired by the actions of those in Anbar and have volunteered to fight extremists as well. We have, in coordination with the Iraqi Government's National Reconciliation Committee, been engaging these tribes and groups of local citizens who want to oppose extremists and to contribute to local security. Some 20,000 such individuals are already being hired for the Iraqi Police, thousands of others are being assimilated into the Iraqi Army, and thousands more are vying for a spot in Iraq's security forces.

IRAQI SECURITY FORCES

As I noted earlier, Iraqi security forces have continued to grow, to develop their capabilities, and to shoulder more of the burden of providing security for their coun-

try. Despite concerns about sectarian influence, inadequate logistics and supporting institutions, and an insufficient number of qualified commissioned and noncommissioned officers, Iraqi units are engaged around the country.

As this chart shows, there are now nearly 140 Iraqi Army, National Police, and Special Operations Forces Battalions in the fight about 95 of those capable of taking the lead in operations, albeit with some coalition support. Beyond that, all of Iraq's battalions have been heavily involved in combat operations that often result in the loss of leaders, soldiers, and equipment. These losses are among the shortcomings identified by operational readiness assessments, but we should not take from these assessments the impression that Iraqi forces are not in the fight and contributing. Indeed, despite their shortages, many Iraqi units across Iraq now operate with minimal coalition assistance.

As counterinsurgency operations require substantial numbers of boots on the ground, we are helping the Iraqis expand the size of their security forces. Currently, there are some 445,000 individuals on the payrolls of Iraq's Interior and Defense Ministries. Based on recent decisions by Prime Minister Maliki, the number of Iraq's security forces will grow further by the end of this year, possibly by as much as 40,000. Given the security challenges Iraq faces, we support this decision, and we will work with the two security ministries as they continue their efforts to expand their basic training capacity, leader development programs, logistical structures and elements, and various other institutional capabilities to support the substantial growth in Iraqi forces.

Significantly, in 2007, Iraq will, as in 2006, spend more on its security forces than it will receive in security assistance from the United States. In fact, Iraq is becoming one of the United States larger foreign military sales customers, committing some $1.6 billion to FMS already, with the possibility of up to $1.8 billion more being committed before the end of this year. And I appreciate the attention that some Members of Congress have recently given to speeding up the FMS process for Iraq.

To summarize, the security situation in Iraq is improving, and Iraqi elements are slowly taking on more of the responsibility for protecting their citizens. Innumerable challenges lie ahead; however, coalition and Iraqi security forces have made progress toward achieving sustainable security. As a result, the United States will be in a position to reduce its forces in Iraq in the months ahead.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Two weeks ago I provided recommendations for the way ahead in Iraq to the members of my chain of command and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The essence of the approach I recommended is captured in its title: "Security While Transitioning: From Leading to Partnering to Overwatch." This approach seeks to build on the security improvements our troopers and our Iraqi counterparts have fought so hard to achieve in recent months. It reflects recognition of the importance of securing the population and the imperative of transitioning responsibilities to Iraqi institutions and Iraqi forces as quickly as possible, but without rushing to failure, It includes substantial support for the continuing development of Iraqi security forces. It also stresses the need to continue the counterinsurgency strategy that we have been employing, but with Iraqis gradually shouldering more of the load. And it highlights the importance of regional and global diplomatic approaches. Finally, in recognition of the fact that this war is not only being fought on the ground in Iraq but also in cyberspace, it also notes the need to contest the enemy's growing use of that important medium to spread extremism.

The recommendations I provided were informed by operational and strategic considerations. The operational considerations include recognition that:

- Military aspects of the surge have achieved progress and generated momentum;
- Iraqi security forces have continued to grow and have slowly been shouldering more of the security burden in Iraq;
- A mission focus on either population security or transition alone will not be adequate to achieve our objectives;
- Success against al-Qaeda–Iraq and Iranian-supported militia extremists requires conventional forces as well as special operations forces; and
- The security and local political situations will enable us to drawdown the surge forces:

My recommendations also took into account a number of strategic considerations:

- Political progress will take place only if sufficient security exists;
- Long-term U.S. ground force viability will benefit from force reductions as the surge runs its course;
- Regional, global, and cyberspace initiatives are critical to success; and

- Iraqi leaders understandably want to assume greater sovereignty in their country although, as they recently announced, they do desire continued presence of coalition forces in Iraq in 2008 under a new U.N. Security Council Resolution and, following that, they want to negotiate a long-term security agreement with the United States and other nations.

Based on these considerations, and having worked the battlefield geometry with LTG Ray Odierno to ensure that we retain and build on the gains for which our troopers have fought, I have recommended a drawdown of the surge forces from Iraq. In fact, later this month, the Marine Expeditionary Unit deployed as part of the surge will depart Iraq. Beyond that, if my recommendations are approved, that unit's departure will be followed by the withdrawal of a brigade combat team without replacement in mid-December and the further redeployment without replacement of four other brigade combat teams and the two surge Marine battalions in the first 7 months of 2008, until we reach the presurge level of 15 brigade combat teams by mid-July 2008.

I would also like to discuss the period beyond next summer. Force reductions will continue beyond the presurge levels of brigade combat teams that we will reach by mid-July 2008; however, in my professional judgment, it would be premature to make recommendations on the pace of such reductions at this time. In fact, our experience in Iraq has repeatedly shown that projecting too far into the future is not just difficult, it can be misleading and even hazardous. The events of the past 6 months underscore that point. When I testified in January, for example, no one would have dared to forecast that Anbar province would have been transformed the way it has in the past 6 months. Nor would anyone have predicted that volunteers in one-time al-Qaeda strongholds like Ghazaliyah in western Baghdad or in Adamiya in eastern Baghdad would seek to join the fight against al-Qaeda. Nor would we have anticipated that a Shia-led government would accept significant numbers of Sunni volunteers into the ranks of the local police force in Abu Ghraib. Beyond that, on a less encouraging note, none of us earlier this year appreciated the extent of Iranian involvement in Iraq, something about which we and Iraq's leaders all now have greater concern.

In view of this, I do not believe it is reasonable to have an adequate appreciation for the pace of further reductions and mission adjustments beyond the summer of 2008 until about mid-March of next year. We will, no later than that time, consider factors similar to those on which I based the current recommendations, having by then, of course, a better feel for the security situation, the improvements in the capabilities of our Iraqi counterparts, and the enemy situation. I will then, as I did in developing the recommendations I have explained here today, also take into consideration the demands on our Nation's ground forces, although I believe that that consideration should once again inform, not drive, the recommendations I make.

This chart captures the recommendations I have described, showing the recommended reduction of brigade combat teams as the surge runs its course and illustrating the concept of our units adjusting their missions and transitioning responsibilities to Iraqis, as the situation and Iraqi capabilities permit. It also reflects the no-later-than date for recommendations on force adjustments beyond next summer and provides a possible approach we have considered for the future force structure and mission set in Iraq.

One may argue that the best way to speed the process in Iraq is to change the MNF–I mission from one that emphasizes population security, counterterrorism, and transition, to one that is strictly focused on transition and counterterrorism. Making that change now would, in our view, be premature. We have learned before that there is a real danger in handing over tasks to the Iraqi security forces before their capacity and local conditions warrant. In fact, the drafters of the recently released National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq recognized this danger when they wrote, and I quote, "We assess that changing the mission of coalition forces from a primarily counterinsurgency and stabilization role to a primary combat support role for Iraqi forces and counterterrorist operations to prevent AQI from establishing a safe haven would erode security gains achieved thus far."

In describing the recommendations I have made, I should note again that, like Ambassador Crocker, I believe Iraq's problems will require a long-term effort. There are no easy answers or quick solutions. And though we both believe this effort can succeed, it will take time. Our assessments underscore, in fact, the importance of recognizing that a premature drawdown of our forces would likely have devastating consequences.

That assessment is supported by the findings of a 16 August Defense Intelligence Agency report on the implications of a rapid withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq. Summarizing it in an unclassified fashion, it concludes that a rapid withdrawal would result in the further release of the strong centrifugal forces in Iraq and

produce a number of dangerous results, including a high risk of disintegration of the Iraqi security forces; rapid deterioration of local security initiatives; al-Qaeda–Iraq regaining lost ground and freedom of maneuver; a marked increase in violence and further ethnosectarian displacement and refugee flows; alliances of convenience by Iraqi groups with internal and external forces to gain advantages over their rivals; and exacerbation of already challenging regional dynamics, especially with respect to Iran.

Lieutenant General Odierno and I share this assessment and believe that the best way to secure our national interests and avoid an unfavorable outcome in Iraq is to continue to focus our operations on securing the Iraqi people while targeting terrorist groups and militia extremists and, as quickly as conditions are met, transitioning security tasks to Iraqi elements.

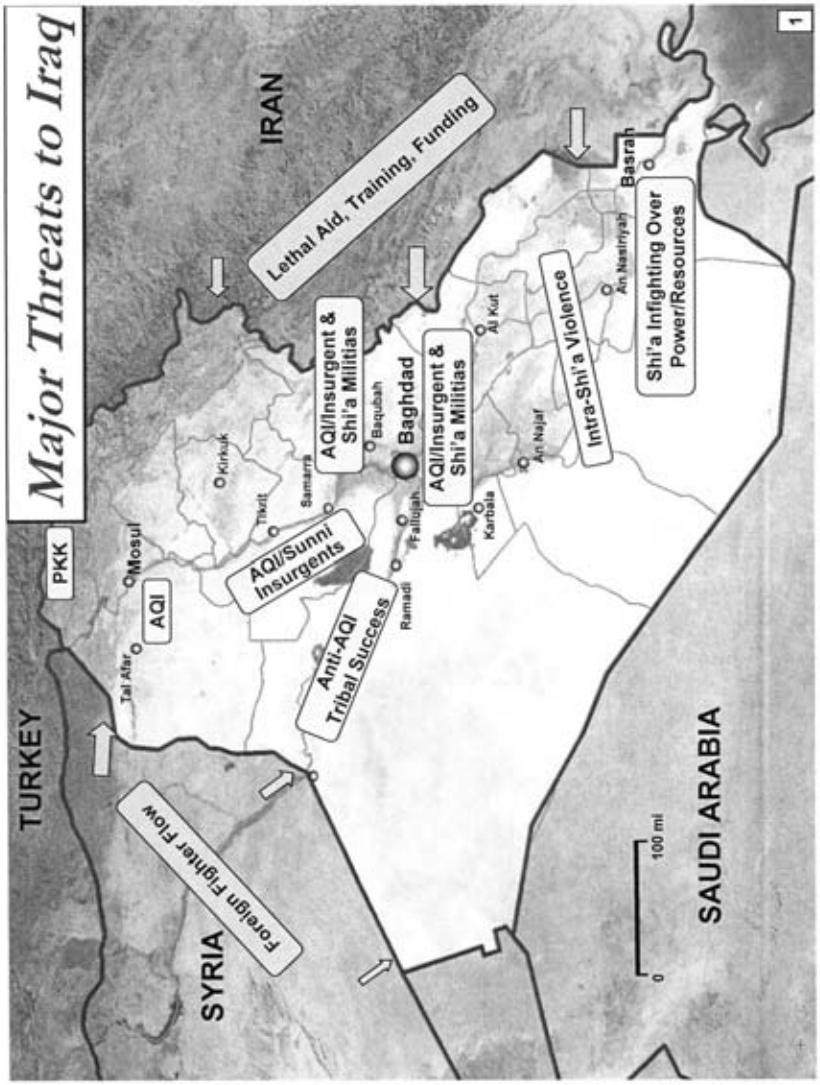
CLOSING COMMENTS

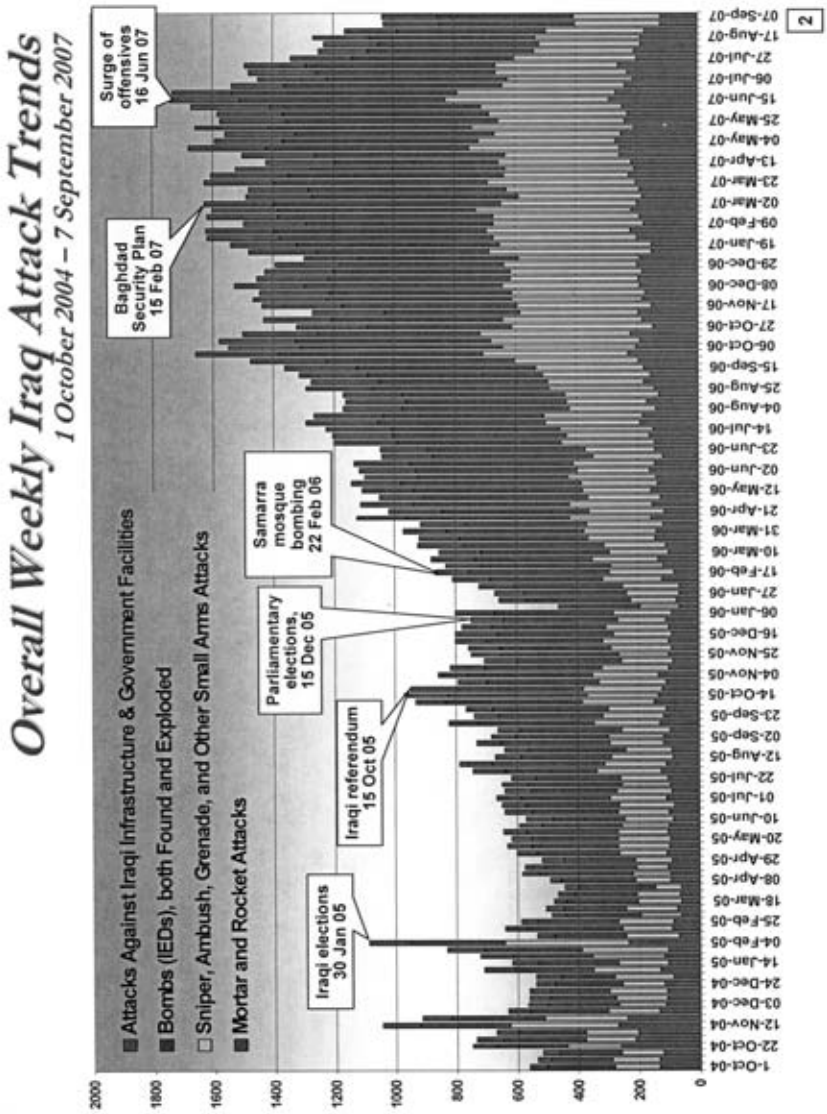
Before closing, I want to thank you and your colleagues for your support of our men and women in uniform in Iraq. The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen with whom I'm honored to serve are the best equipped and, very likely, the most professional force in our Nation's history. Impressively, despite all that has been asked of them in recent years, they continue to raise their right hands and volunteer to stay in uniform. With 3 weeks to go in this fiscal year, in fact, the Army elements in Iraq, for example, have achieved well over 130 percent of the reenlistment goals in the initial term and careerist categories and nearly 115 percent in the mid-career category. All of us appreciate what you have done to ensure that these great troopers have had what they've needed to accomplish their mission, just as we appreciate what you have done to take care of their families, as they, too, have made significant sacrifices in recent years.

The advances you have underwritten in weapons systems and individual equipment; in munitions; in command; control, and communications systems; in intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities; in vehicles and counter-IED systems and programs; and in manned and unmanned aircraft have proven invaluable in Iraq. The capabilities that you have funded most recently—especially the vehicles that will provide greater protection against improvised explosive devices—are also of enormous importance. Additionally, your funding of the Commander's Emergency Response Program has given our leaders a critical tool with which to prosecute the counterinsurgency campaign. Finally, we appreciate as well your funding of our new detention programs and rule of law initiatives in Iraq.

In closing, it remains an enormous privilege to soldier again in Iraq with America's new "Greatest Generation." Our country's men and women in uniform have done a magnificent job in the most complex and challenging environment imaginable. All Americans should be very proud of their sons and daughters serving in Iraq today.

[Charts referred to by GEN Petraeus during his testimony and in his prepared statement follows:]




Overall Weekly Iraq Attack Trends
1 October 2004 – 7 September 2007
Attacks Against Iraqi Infrastructure & Government Facilities
Bombs (IEDs), both Found and Exploded
Sniper, Ambush, Grenade, and Other Small Arms Attacks
Mortar and Rocket Attacks
Iraqi elections 30 Jan 05
Iraqi referendum 15 Oct 05
Parliamentary elections, 15 Dec 05
Samarra mosque bombing 22 Feb 06
Baghdad Security Plan 15 Feb 07
Surge of offensives 16 Jun 07
2000
1800
1600
1400
1200
1000
800
600
400
200
0
1-Oct-04
22-Oct-04
12-Nov-04
03-Dec-04
24-Dec-04
14-Jan-05
04-Feb-05
25-Feb-05
18-Mar-05
08-Apr-05
29-Apr-05
20-May-05
10-Jun-05
01-Jul-05
22-Jul-05
12-Aug-05
02-Sep-05
23-Sep-05
14-Oct-05
04-Nov-05
25-Nov-05
16-Dec-05
06-Jan-06
27-Jan-06
17-Feb-06
10-Mar-06
31-Mar-06
21-Apr-06
12-May-06
02-Jun-06
23-Jun-06
14-Jul-06
04-Aug-06
25-Aug-06
15-Sep-06
06-Oct-06
27-Oct-06
17-Nov-06
08-Dec-06
29-Dec-06
19-Jan-07
09-Feb-07
02-Mar-07
23-Mar-07
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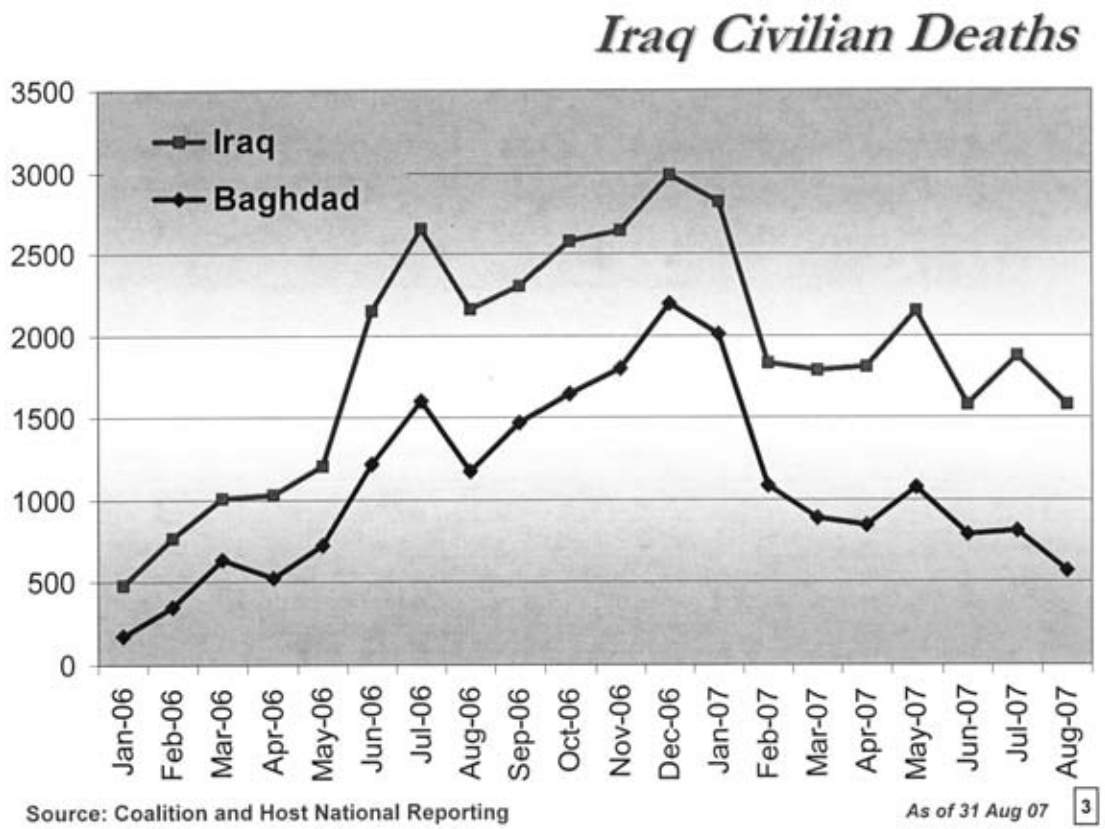
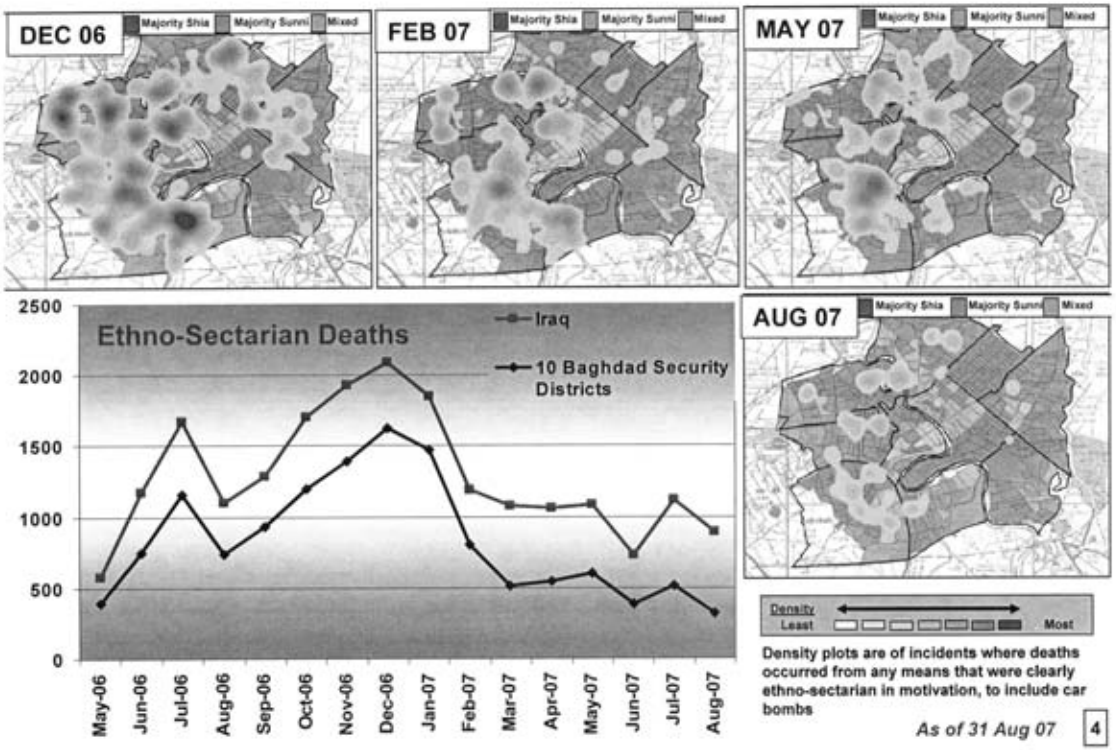
17-Aug-07
07-Sep-07
2


Iraq Civilian Deaths
Iraq
Baghdad
3500
3000
2500
2000
1500
1000
500
0
Jan-06
Feb-06
Mar-06
Apr-06
May-06
Jun-06
Jul-06
Aug-06
Sep-06
Oct-06
Nov-06
Dec-06
Jan-07
Feb-07
Mar-07
Apr-07
May-07
Jun-07
Jul-07
Aug-07
Source: Coalition and Host National Reporting
As of 31 Aug 07
3

Ethno-Sectarian Violence

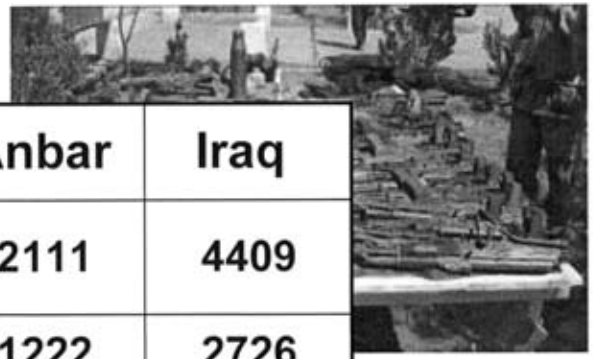


Density plots are of incidents where deaths occurred from any means that were clearly ethno-sectarian in motivation, to include car bombs

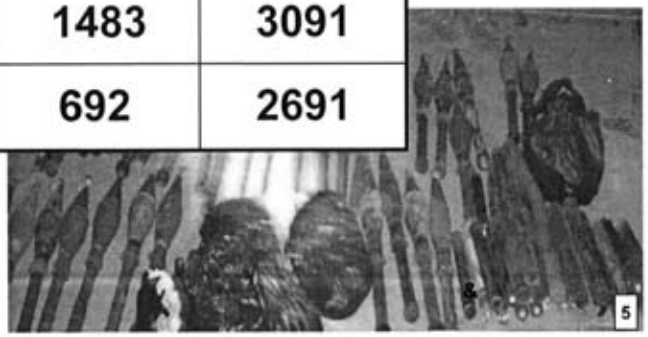
As of 31 Aug 07

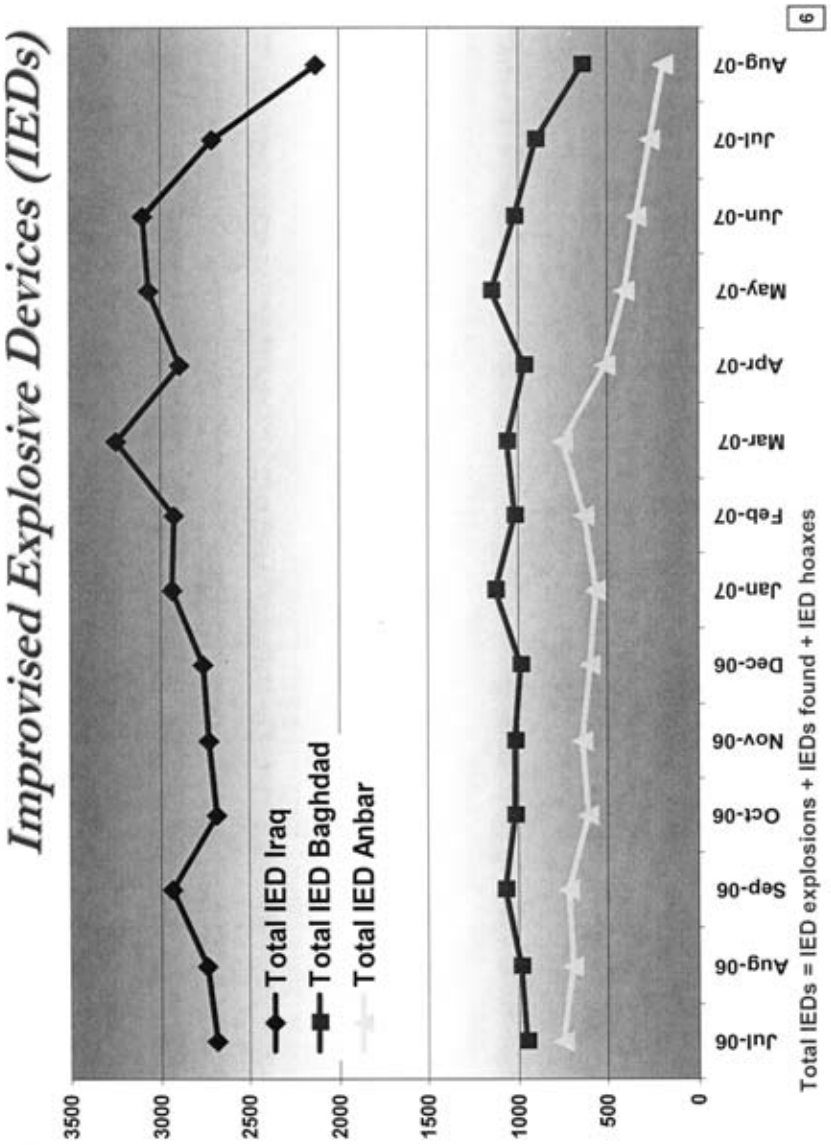
4

Caches Found & Cleared

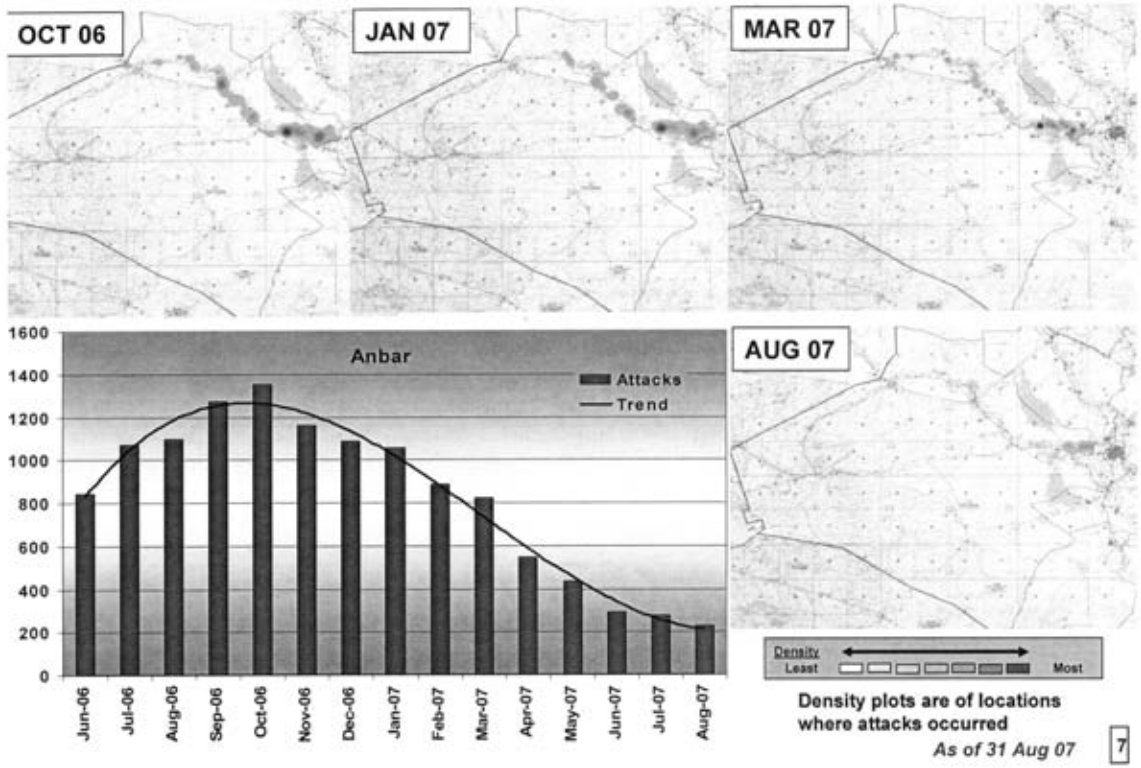


Year	Anbar	Iraq
1 JAN 07- 7 SEP 07	2111	4409
2006	1222	2726
2005	1483	3091
2004	692	2691




Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs)
Total IED Iraq
Total IED Baghdad
Total IED Anbar
3500
3000
2500
2000
1500
1000
500
0
Jul-06
Aug-06
Sep-06
Oct-06
Nov-06
Dec-06
Jan-07
Feb-07
Mar-07
Apr-07
May-07
Jun-07
Jul-07
Aug-07
Total IEDs = IED explosions + IEDs found + IED hoaxes
9

Anbar Attacks

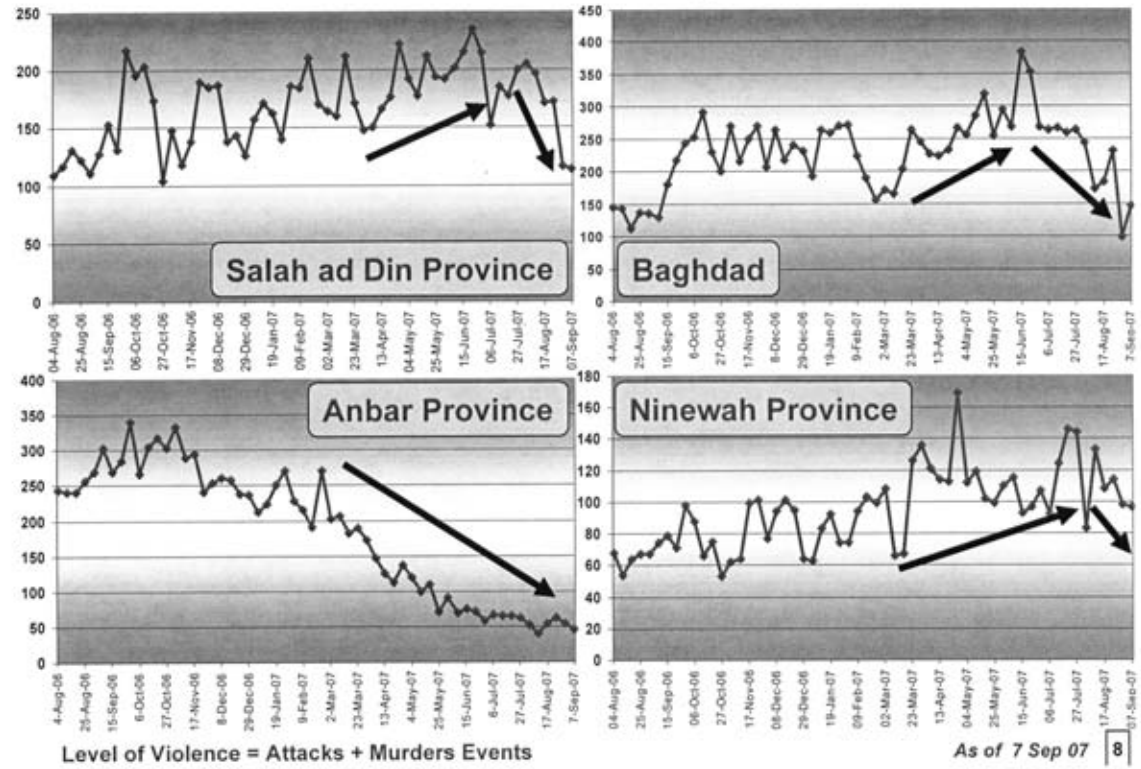


Density plots are of locations where attacks occurred

As of 31 Aug 07

7

Iraq Violence Trends

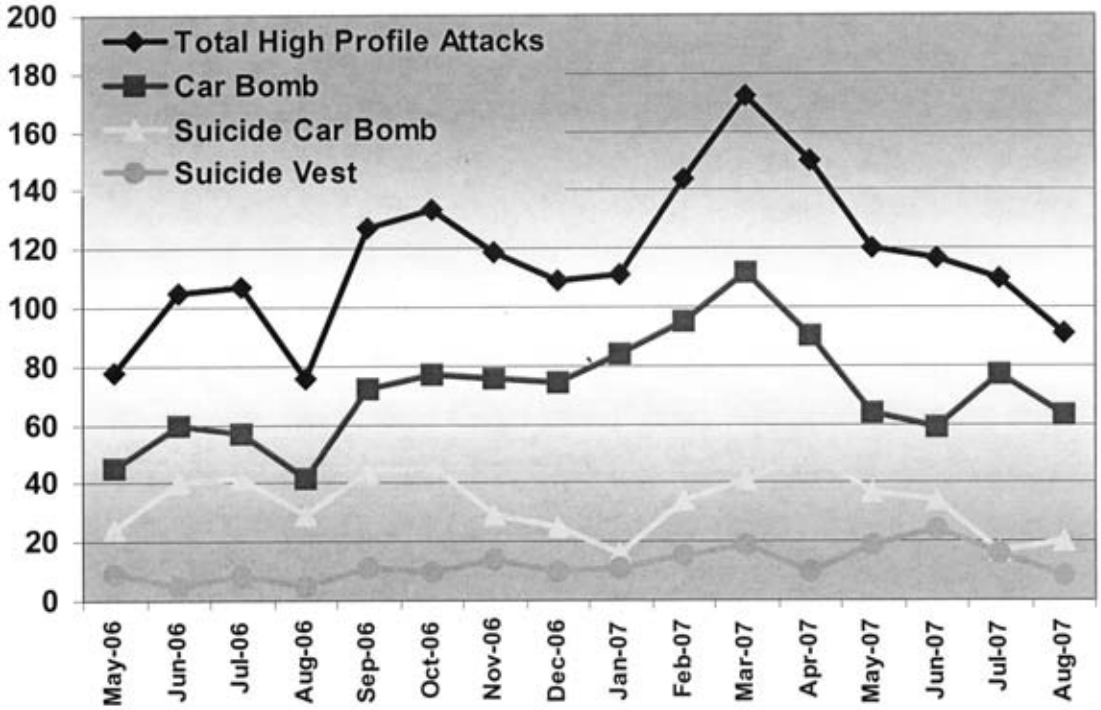


Level of Violence = Attacks + Murders Events

As of 7 Sep 07

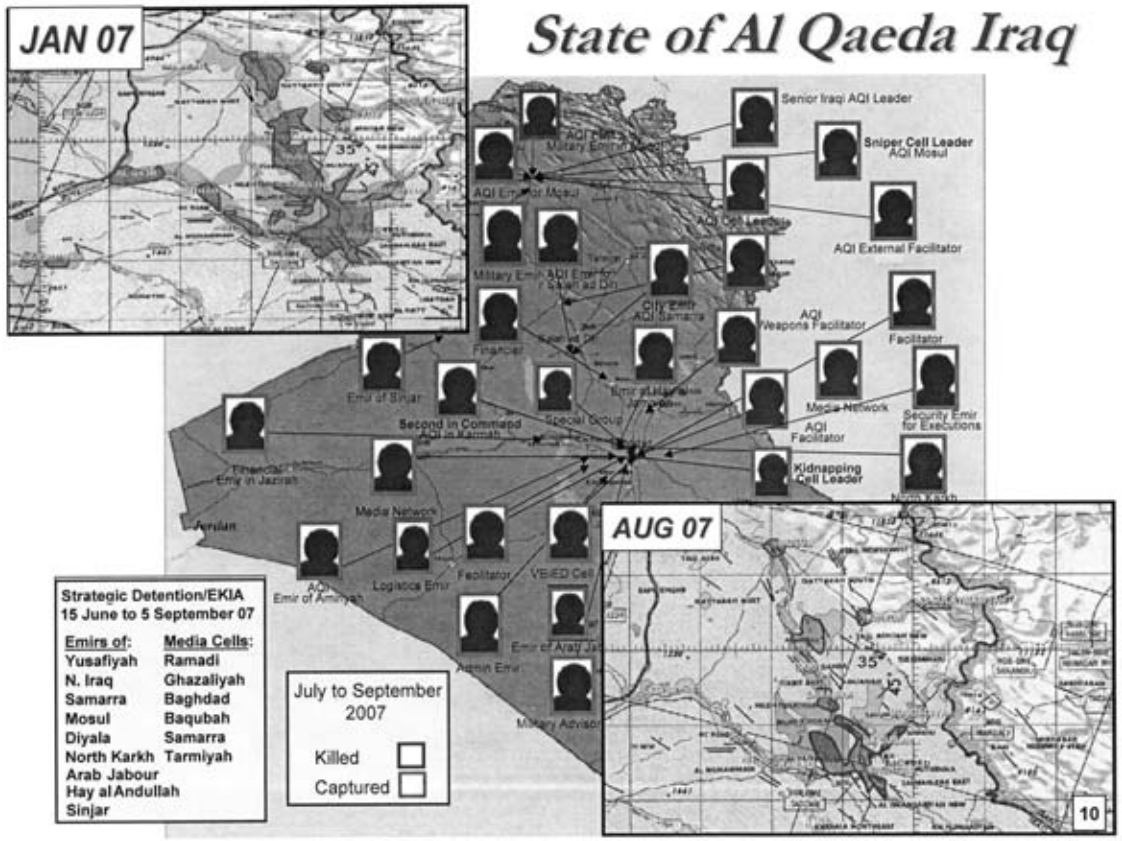
8

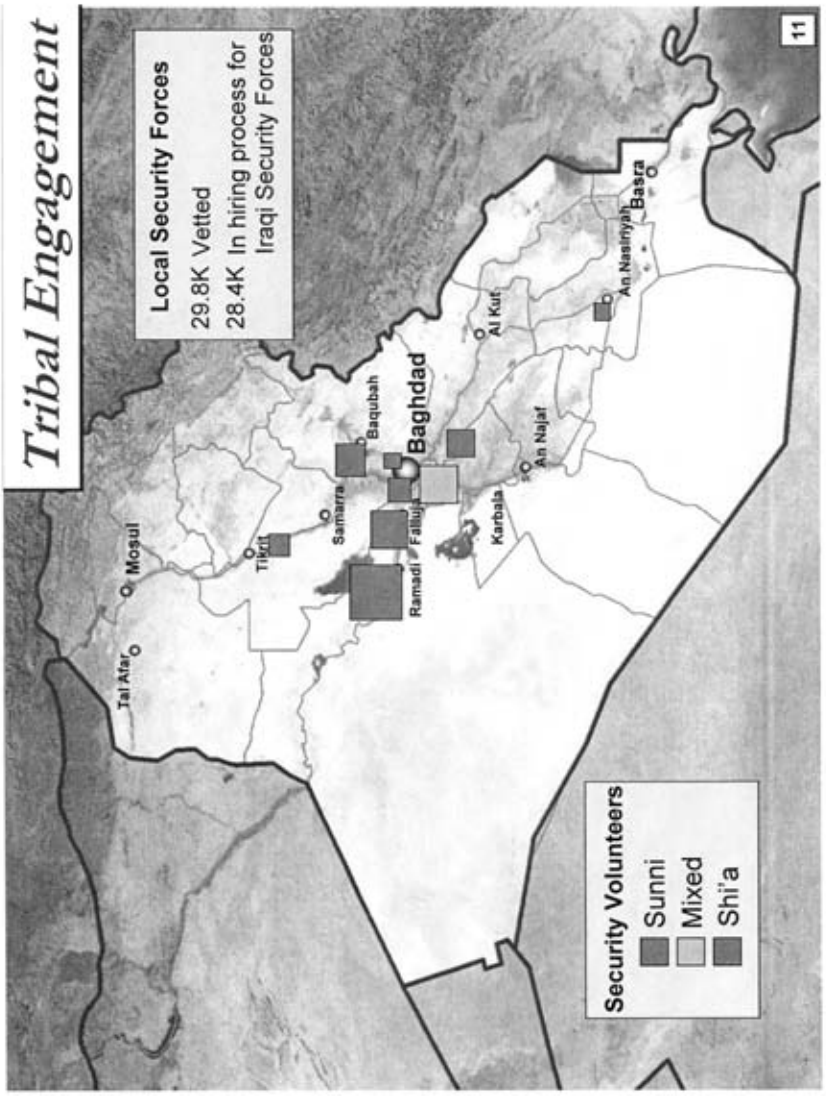
High Profile Attacks



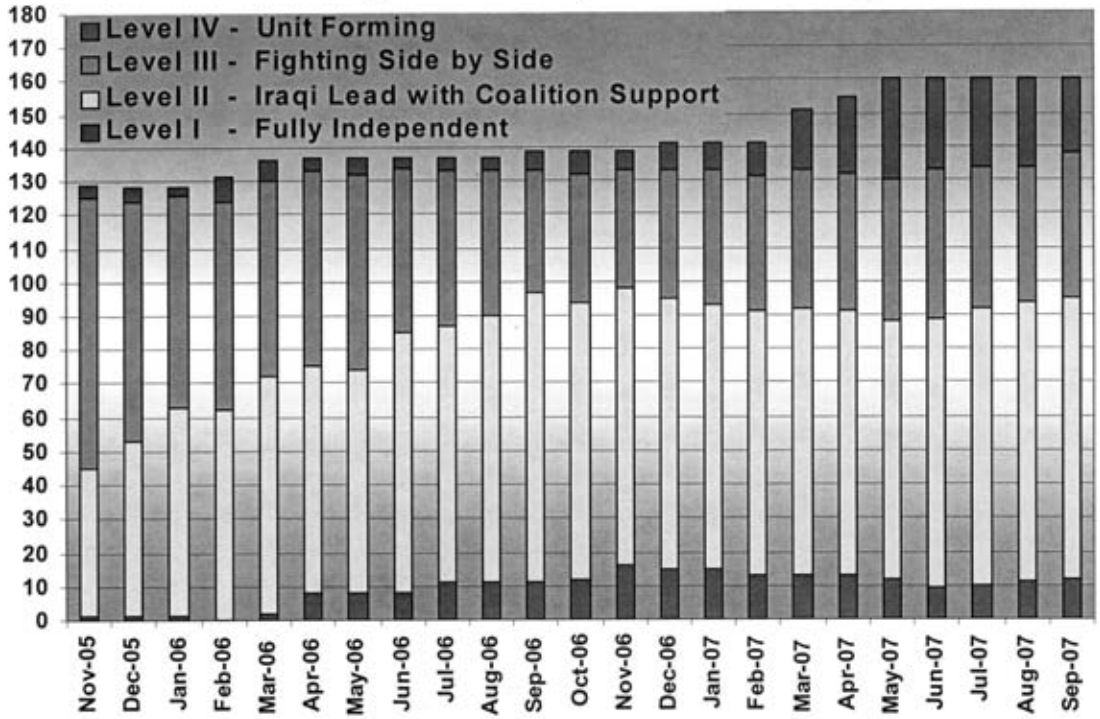
As of 31 AUG 07; High Profile = Car bombs + suicide car bombs + suicide vests

9


State of Al Qaeda Iraq
JAN 07
AUG 07
Senior Iraqi AQI Leader
Sniper Cell Leader
AQI Mosul
AQI External Facilitator
AQI Weapons Facilitator
Facilitator
Media Network
Security Emir for Executions
AQI Facilitator
Kidnapping Cell Leader
Emir of Sinjar
Second in Command
Special Group
Financial Emir in Jazirah
Arsilan
Media Network
Logistics Emir
Facilitator
VBIED Cell
Admin Emir
Military Advisor
Strategic Detention/EKIA
15 June to 5 September 07
Emirs of:
Yusafiyah
N. Iraq
Samarra
Mosul
Diyala
North Karkh
Arab Jabour
Hay al Andullah
Sinjar
Media Cells:
Ramadi
Ghazaliyah
Baghdad
Baqubah
Samarra
Tarmiyah
July to September 2007
Killed
Captured
10

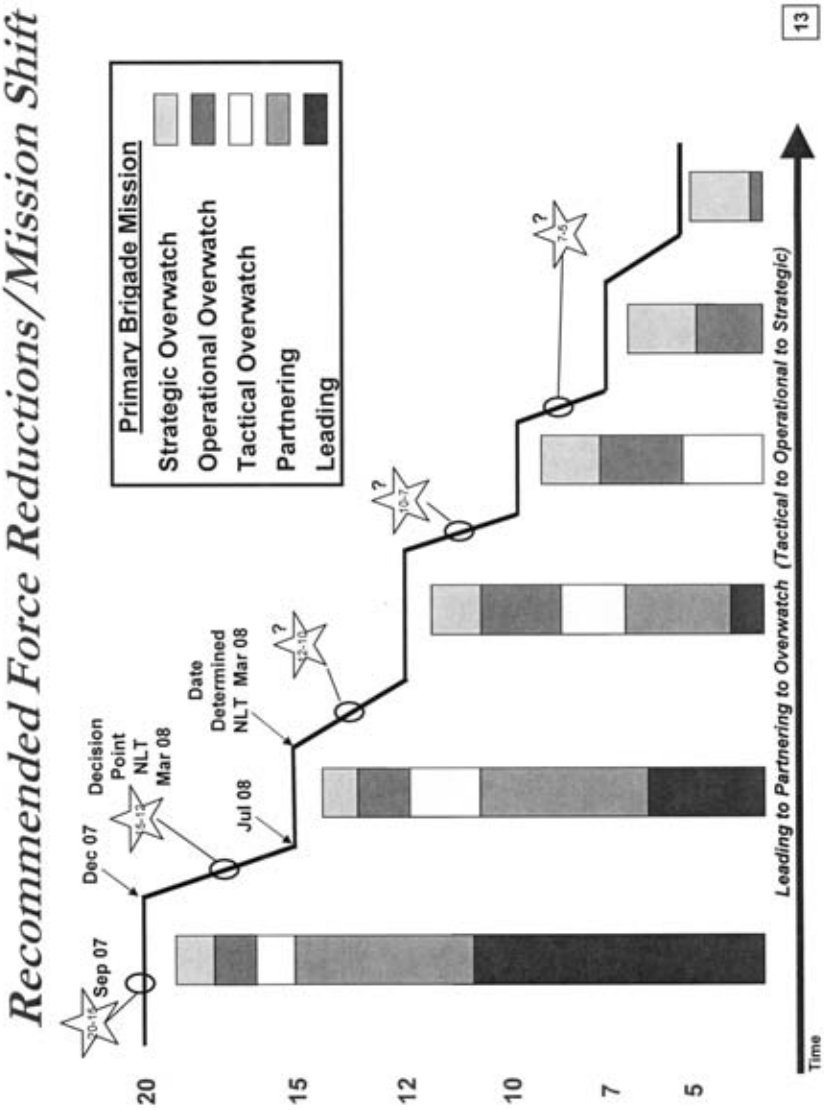

Tribal Engagement
Local Security Forces
29.8K Vetted
28.4K In hiring process for Iraqi Security Forces
Security Volunteers
Sunni
Mixed
Shi'a
Mosul
Tal Afar
Tikrit
Samarra
Baqubah
Baghdad
Ramadi
Fallujah
Karbala
An Najaf
Al Kut
An Nasiriyah
Basra
11

Iraqi Security Forces Capabilities



Iraqi Army Battalions, National Police Battalions, and Special Operating Force Battalions

12



The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, General.

Mr. Chairman, we go to 7-minutes—I think—I say to my colleagues, our witnesses have to be at the Armed Services Committee this afternoon, so we're going to hold this to 7-minute rounds, and that will just, I think, get us under the wire, everybody being able to ask their questions. OK? But I'm going to hold us strictly to 7 minutes, if you don't mind.

General, as you know, there are independent studies, such as the General Accounting Office report, that disputes your statistics, but let me not get into that debate, let me just ask you a question. Can

a Sunni Arab travel safely to a Shia neighborhood in Baghdad today, without fear of being kidnapped or killed?

General PETRAEUS. First of all, Mr. Chairman, if I could just make one comment about the GAO report, because one of the reasons for difference, frankly, is that they did have an earlier data cutoff. It's at least 5 weeks prior to our data cutoff, which runs until this past Friday, and the trends that have developed, in fact, have been, in many respects, confirmed by the data since that time. In some cases, there were earlier——

The CHAIRMAN. You're saying——

General PETRAEUS [continuing]. Than the data cutoff.

The CHAIRMAN [continuing]. The 5-week trends—5-week difference confirms your data being correct. Is that what you're saying?

General PETRAEUS. What I'm saying, Mr. Chairman, is that the additional 5 weeks of data—their data is our data. I mean, everyone generally uses the same database. And they just—because of the requirement to submit their report, to go—get back here and to write it, and so forth, they had a data cutoff that was about 5 weeks before the data that I just showed you, and that does have quite a significant difference, because, again, the trend of—a 12-week trend—the final 5 weeks have been pretty important. In some cases, we think the data cutoff may have been even earlier, in their particular report.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, again, I don't want to get in an argument about that, but if you look at your own chart, there have been at least four other occasions where there have been significant decreases in violence over a 3-month period, and then it's shot back up. Five weeks in Iraq is a moment, as you know better than I do, General.

General PETRAEUS. Well, this is 3 months, of course.

The CHAIRMAN. I understand that.

General PETRAEUS. And, again, we are certainly watching it to see, and we're fighting, obviously——

The CHAIRMAN. We're still talking about 1,000—over 1,000 weekly attacks—1,000—and we're calling that "success." Granted, it is down from 1,680 or thereabouts, but 1,000 a week.

Let me get directly to my question, and that is: Can a Sunni Arab travel safely from a Sunni neighborhood in Baghdad into a Shia neighborhood in Baghdad?

General PETRAEUS. It depends on the neighborhood, frankly, sir. There's no question but that travel of Sunni Arabs in a number of Shia neighborhoods in Baghdad is still hazardous. And, as I mentioned——

The CHAIRMAN. Is there any neighborhood in Baghdad that a Shia can safely travel that's a—a Sunni can travel—that's a Shia neighborhood? Is there any——

General PETRAEUS. Well, there are still substantial mixed neighborhoods, certainly, in the southeastern part of Baghdad, in particular, in which that is possible; yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. The Ambassador and I went to this reconstruction conference. The leaders from Baghdad—the Kurdish Deputy Prime Minister, the Shia Vice President, Sunni Vice President—we were all—I was supposed to fly back and meet with Maliki. The

helicopter was grounded because of a windstorm; we all sat there for 3 hours, because no one dared leave that city in a vehicle. Now, I found that kind of interesting, that if—we would have stayed there the whole night. I don't think there's any possibility, had we—that sandstorm kept up—would anybody—those guys—gotten in a vehicle and traveled back to Baghdad. Maybe I'm mistaken. Was there any possibility that was likely to happen?

Ambassador CROCKER. Yes, sir. We tried to keep some of the commotion behind the scenes and out of your view, but one of the alternatives we were actively working on was a road movement all the way back to Baghdad if we couldn't get the helicopter——

The CHAIRMAN. And that road movement would have been highly secured, would it not?

Ambassador CROCKER. Well, for the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Oh, I love ya. [Laughter.]

I love ya. Would have been, also, for the Kurdish Deputy Prime Minister. He would not be riding back and getting in his diplomatic automobile and driving back. Let's be straight, guys. You know, we—the idea that I could have walked outside—or we could have walked outside that city and just toured the outside of the city—you guys would have had an apoplectic fit were that to occur, and no one would have stepped outside the city. I—let's assume you're right, there's a reduction. It's the difference—my view, without the distinction—

Well, let me get to my next question. Mr. Ambassador, you indicated that progress will not be quick. In nondiplomatic speak, what does that mean? Should we be telling the American people that we're there for another 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10 years, in relatively large numbers? What do you mean by, "It will not be quick"?

Ambassador CROCKER. I think, in the past we have set some expectations that simply couldn't be met. And I'm trying not to do that.

The CHAIRMAN. I'm trying to get an accurate estimation.

Ambassador CROCKER. In terms of concrete things like force levels, as General Petraeus said, neither of us believe we can see beyond next summer. It would be——

The CHAIRMAN. But you are seeing beyond next summer. You're saying, "The process will not be quick." Are you talking about "not quick," meaning a timeframe of a year? Are you talking about "not quick" being well beyond the end of next summer?

Ambassador CROCKER. It could be well beyond the end of next summer. It certainly will be well beyond the end of next summer before Iraq can achieve the end state I've laid out. There's no question. What that implies for, you know, our presence—levels and so forth—that I can't——

The CHAIRMAN. Well—I have a minute and 16 seconds left—let me suggest that the administration's policy, from the outset, has been to set up a democratic central government in Iraq that is trusted by the Iraqi people, that we will stand up an Iraqi Army so our men and women can stand down and come home, and that the security forces that were added in this tactical ramp-up were designed in order to provide for the government to have breathing room to reach a political reconciliation. Is it not true that the fun-

damental purpose of the surge, the primary purpose—political settlement—has not been met, at this point?

Ambassador CROCKER. Sir, clearly we do not have a national-level political settlement. It also, I think, is in no way reasonable to expect that a surge that reached its full strength just in the middle of June——

The CHAIRMAN. Well, that's what you asserted, though. The administration asserted that's what they need. Let me ask a concluding question in my 19 seconds, here. If, in fact, the circumstances at the ground are exactly what they are today in March of next year, will you recommend the continuation of somewhere between 130 and 160,000 American troops being shot at, killed, and maimed every day there?

General PETRAEUS. Mr. Chairman, I—that's a pretty big hypothetical. And as——

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I don't think it's hypothetical.

General PETRAEUS. As it—I would be very hard-pressed to recommend that, at that point in time, obviously.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I would pray you'd be wise enough not to recommend it and start to listen to General Jones and others, who talk about a fundamental redeployment of our force, a fundamental change in our footprint in the region, and a fundamental alteration of our objective in moving toward a federal system.

But my time is up. I yield to Senator Lugar.

Senator LUGAR. Mr. Chairman, I express the regrets of Senator Voinovich in being unable to attend the hearing. He's attending the funeral of Congressman Paul Gilmore in Ohio. He sends his best to both of you gentlemen, and appreciates your attendance, and asks that questions that he might ask might follow his return.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection.

Senator LUGAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Petraeus, in the current Newsweek magazine there is a description of strategy-building in Iraq—the article is called "Brainiac Brigade," and it discusses, and compliments, the officers that you have gathered around you who, at least beginning in meetings in March and perhaps thereafter, defined a possible strategy of beefing up the local people. You have both mentioned this today, that essentially you try to find pockets of stability, or near-stability, where ethnic cleansing has ceased, where at least violence appears to be lower, or can be contained, and there appear to be responsible persons at the local or the provincial level who are prepared to take some responsibility. And, at least according to the Newsweek article, this strategy has won out over a strategy that would pursue every insurgent everywhere, which would be less practical than the one you apparently adopted.

Now, building on that, essentially, David Brooks, in the New York Times today, responding to the testimony of both of you gentlemen yesterday, indicates that this strategy of attempting to build the locals at least is making some headway. Even if the central government is not able to reconcile Shiites and Sunnis, or various divisions even among the Shiites and so forth, locals are doing better at this. He also, of course, mentions that, in part, one reason for the decline in killings in Baghdad, and in those areas that were illustrated on the charts, is that as many as 35,000 Sunni families

have fled Baghdad this year. A good number of formerly mixed neighborhoods are now more homogeneous. Some of your troops have built walls around various neighborhoods—it's been reported for several months—so people could not kill each other as readily. In some places you may have total cleansing, while in others you have reconciliation and still others a local consensus to enforce law and order. This raises a question on where and how to intervene or enforce. The President, by going to Anbar not to Baghdad on his recent trip perhaps acknowledges this. Anbar, being perhaps a signal victory for localism.

Now, Ambassador Crocker, from the diplomatic standpoint, as you look at all of this over the course of time, potentially, this is clearly not a strategy that anyone would have founded at the beginning, but perhaps one in which a good number of people are able to live and let live, and to govern themselves.

We note the Kurds, yesterday, were dealing with the Hunt Oil Company. Now, the Hunts are not drilling for oil yet, but, nevertheless, they left well beyond the oil law, although they promised to distribute the money if any of it comes to it. In other words, are there possibilities in which you have these local situations that, sort of, contribute in a united way, so the central government, feeble as it may be, inept, and so forth, either for purposes of distribution or some sense of unity. Or perhaps a functioning federalism will develop, or what some have called—sort of, soft partition—not the three parts that were often mentioned, but multiple parts, as a matter of fact?

And, if so, can this be protected or reinforced, then, by the diplomacy, which you mentioned? Can we institute something more forcefully, with a regular secretariat, meeting all the time? I envision a forum with people rubbing shoulders on a regular basis rather than wondering who they're talking to, simply so there are not misapprehensions or miscalculations and bringing transparency, at least among the neighbors into what is occurring. This might prevent invasions of others, as we go forward perhaps with a minimal number of American troops there to keep the peace, generally, to be a gentle referee of the process as the Iraqis work things out.

Can you make any comment about this, sort of, general view of things?

Ambassador CROCKER. Thank you, sir.

I'd make two general comments. First, on what is going on, or what may go on, in Iraq. I would agree completely that we have to maintain an open mind, a minimum of preconceptions, an absence of U.S. models for what Iraq should be, and an awareness and readiness to respond to what may actually be happening on the ground that can take Iraq in a positive direction, whatever that may be. The Iraq of the future will definitely not resemble Iraq of 2003, and it may differ greatly from Iraq today.

There is decentralization going on. There's no question. The role and power of governors and provincial councils, although not yet fully defined, is far in excess of what it ever has been. And I think that is a good thing. So, the Iraqis, again, are going to need to debate these things for themselves at every level, and there have to be connections between the levels. And that's what I was referring

to in my statement when I noted that we are starting to see a more robust debate on what the nature of federalism is, and we're starting to see it among Sunnis, which I think is a positive sign.

So, I think things can very well move in that direction. And, if, and as, they do, we need to be there to encourage positive direction.

With respect, again, to the neighbors and others, that is exactly our intent, to have a more intensive, more positive, more regulated engagement between Iraq and its neighbors. I think, for example, that it would be a very good thing if some of Iraq's Arab neighbors, themselves, decided to support economic development, say, in Anbar, now that you have a security environment that permits that.

I also think the United Nations is now positioned to play a more active and involved role. As you know, the new mandate for UNAMI contains a number of additional areas, including those you touch on. They now have a mandate to support national dialog and political reconciliation, to resolve disputed boundaries within Iraq, to promote regional dialogue, all with, of course, the permission of the Iraqi Government, at the request of the Iraqi Government. So, I think, again, you have an Iraqi internal process—or, in reality, processes—that we have to be attuned to and encourage them to move on, but then a number of opportunities to support that, regionally—bilaterally, regionally, internationally, and internationally with the U.N. mission in Iraq. So, I think all of those come into play.

Senator LUGAR. I thank you very much. I thank both of you for your service. America is fortunate to have such extraordinary leadership, at this point.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Dodd.

Senator DODD. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My understanding, is that our longer statements will all be included in the record.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes. Any opening statement that anyone would want to make will be placed in the record before the question period.

Senator DODD. I think you, Mr. Chairman. And I'll ask that be done.

[The prepared statement of Senator Dodd follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. CHRISTOPHER J. DODD, U.S. SENATOR FROM CONNECTICUT

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this critical hearing. General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker thank you for your service to this country and for appearing before this committee today.

It pains me to say that this administration's Iraq policy, including the surge tactic is a failure—and that failure is reconfirmed everyday by unfolding events in Iraq.

The August 2007 National Intelligence Estimate makes clear that violence in Iraq remains high and critical. Among its conclusions are that, "the level of overall violence, including attacks on and causalities among civilians remains high," that "Iraq's sectarian groups remain unreconciled," and that "Iraqi political leaders remain unable to govern effectively." It also determined that "broadly accepted political compromises required for sustained security, long-term political progress and economic development are unlikely to emerge unless there is a fundamental shift in the factors driving Iraqi political and security developments."

The Government Accountability Office has also weighed in on this matter. In its recently released report assessing the progress that Iraqi authorities have made in meeting benchmarks that were set by them, the GAO declared that the Iraqi Government has not met the vast majority of its own legislative and security benchmarks. The GAO report directly contradicts the Defense Department's analysis of the alleged decreasing violence in Iraq.

Testifying before this committee last week, Comptroller General David Walker explained that "the primary point of the surge was to improve security, in particular, in Baghdad, in order to provide political breathing room, to make the necessary tradeoffs to achieve political progress, hopefully resulting in national unification." And with respect to achieving its intended goal, Mr. Walker asserted that "as of this point in time, it [the surge] has not achieved its desired outcome."

General Jones recently reiterated this exact point—he concluded that "the most important event that could immediately and favorably affect Iraq's direction and security is political reconciliation . . . Sustained progress within the Iraqi security forces depends on such a political agreement."

In the 8 months since President Bush announced the surge, we have spent tens of billions of dollars, over 700 American service men and women have sacrificed their lives, and nearly 4,400 have been wounded—all to provide breathing space for the Iraqi Government to engage in political reconciliation. And what has the Iraqi Government done with this breathing space?

It failed to meet vital political benchmarks it set for itself: Those benchmarks include completing a constitutional review, implementing laws to roll back de-Baathification, enacting legislation relating to oil revenue sharing, amnesty, and outlawing and disarming militias.

This unfinished legislative agenda did not stop the Iraqi Congress from taking an entire month of vacation this past summer, all while our troops continued to surge into the streets of Baghdad, sustaining some of the highest casualty rates in recent months. And in July a block of Sunni politicians resigned from the government, leaving more than half of the cabinet seats vacant.

And all the happy talk that the surge is working isn't fooling the Iraqi people.

According to recent polling, about 68 percent of Iraqis believe that the surge tactic has hampered conditions for political reconciliation, reconstruction, and economic developments. Seventy percent of Iraqis believe that security has deteriorated as a result of the surge tactic, while 60 percent believe it's OK to attack U.S.-led forces.

This poll also found that 93 percent of all Iraqi Sunnis think it is justified to kill American troops. I sincerely hope that the Sunnis whom we are arming and training in Anbar province all fall within the 7 percent of that population that does not think it is justified to kill American troops. Otherwise, we are simply arming our future enemies—making the exact same mistakes we made in Afghanistan during the cold war, with dire consequences for the safety of our men and women in uniform and the future in Iraq.

It is crystal clear that continued military intervention in a domestic sectarian internecine civil war in Iraq is only delaying the day of political reckoning in Iraq. Only the Iraqi political leadership, at all levels, can reach political accommodations necessary to bring that country together politically and thereby reduce violence, of all forms, in that country. There is no military solution to the conflict in Iraq; you said that yourself, General Petraeus.

And yet our military tactics have resulted in zero political movement toward a political solution. That government is further away from such an accommodation than when the surge tactic started. And frankly unless we make them take ownership of their own destiny they never will reach a political accommodation to resolve their differences.

That is why I will not support any additional assistance for our military involvement in Iraq that does not include a clear enforcement date for beginning and completing the deployment of U.S. combat forces from Iraq.

I sincerely hope that members of this committee will continue to stand in opposition to this failed policy in Iraq and continue to demand that the President immediately change course in Iraq by beginning a redeployment of our combat forces from that country.

Senator DODD. Let me join with the chairman and you, General Petraeus, in, of course, expressing our deep appreciation for the men and women under your command. Whatever disagreements we have here about policy, I don't think you'll find any member of this committee, or any Member of this Congress—in fact, the constituents we represent—while there are disagreements, and serious

ones, over policy issues, there is a deep and profound respect for the men and women who are serving in a very, very difficult set of circumstances. And I wouldn't want to begin any comments without expressing that view. It's important. I think they understand that—but, while we debate about policy questions, there's no debate about the admiration we have for the courage they're showing under these circumstances.

There have been reports about the data and the methods used for securing the number of statistics we're going to deal with, that we are dealing with regarding the level of violence in the area. I noted, on the chart, General, that you showed—I think it was the—one of the first page—I won't ask you to put it back up, but it shows the chart of the violence. I'm just curious—it shows, here, actually, that the surge begins, really, about February 1, 2007, on the chart, and that—the numbers seem to come down. They're already down from the high mark earlier. Am I misreading that?

General PETRAEUS. No; that is absolutely correct. In fact, there was actually quite a substantial drop in the month of February, just with the announcement of the Baghdad Security Plan. In fact, a number of, we think, Shia militia elements took a knee for a while to sort of sort out. I think they didn't realize that we did not have more than just the initial brigade on the ground. But there's no question that the ethnosectarian violence had crested, really, in December, and was headed down at that time, although still at very, very high levels.

Senator DODD. OK. Well, we can go around and debate the statistics here back and forth. The GAO, obviously, has a different set of conclusions, and there are others who argue about how well the surge is working, in terms of the level of violence. But the whole purpose of it, of course, as you've been stating, and the Ambassador has, is creating that space for the political process to move forward. Now, some 700 troops have been injured in the timeframe we've been there in this past 8 or 9—8 months or so.

I was at Walter Reed recently, talking to a young man from Connecticut who had lost his eye in Iraq—would go back, by the way, this afternoon; not an uncommon reaction of people serving—and he said the following to me, and I'm almost quoting him for you, General. I asked him about the surge and how it was working. He said to me, "Senator, we'll spend a month, month and a half to clean out an area." He said, "An hour and a half," and I'm quoting him exactly here, "an hour and a half after we leave"—it may be an exaggeration, obviously—"after we leave, things are right back the way they were before." He went on to say, "Look, the civilian population"—and, again, I'm quoting him—he said, "they know where the IEDs are, they know where the ammo dumps are. They won't share that information with us here."

I'm looking at statistics. This morning, when asking, "Do you think the increase in U.S. forces in Baghdad and the surrounding provinces over the past months has made security better?" 70 percent say worse in the deployment areas; 68 percent, elsewhere in Iraq, draw the same conclusions. Another recent poll had—68 percent of Iraqis believe that the surge has hampered conditions for political reconciliation, 70 percent believe the security has deterio-

rated as a result of this, 93 percent of all Iraqi Sunnis think it's justifiable to kill Americans.

How do we justify this continuation? And what makes us believe, given the failure over the past number of months on a number of key issues, which Senator Lugar raised, and Senator Biden has raised, the benchmarks that they set for themselves—completing a constitutional review, implementing laws to roll back the de-Baathification, enacting legislation relating to oil revenue-sharing, amnesty, and outlawing and disarming militias—all of those benchmarks, they set for themselves, and yet we're seeing nothing getting better here at all. And, as General Jones recently pointed out in his own testimony, or talking, here, he said that, "Long-term security advances in Iraq are impossible without political reconciliation," again, something both of you recognize. And yet, I don't seem to get an indication, don't get a feeling here, that there's any real opportunity or optimism that this is going to get better. All of the effort that's been made over the years—before the surge—how many conversations did President Bush have with the leadership in Iraq—Vice President Cheney, congressional leaders going over there? We have been begging that leadership for the last 4½ years to get their act together, begging them to do it, understanding that only they can do it. And yet, you come here again this morning, 4½ years later, even after the surge—you can argue about statistics, but no real indication that we're getting any closer to that. What makes you possibly believe that anything further like this is going to produce the results that everyone else has failed to produce over the previous 4½ years?

General PETRAEUS. What I draw some encouragement from, Senator, is, again, the activity that is ongoing, actually, in the absence of legislation. There is, for example, no oil-revenue-sharing law that has been agreed, that—it's been proposed, but certainly not passed, by the Council of Representatives. But Iraq is actually sharing oil revenue. In fact, very similar to what is likely to happen if that—the bill, as currently envisioned, is passed. In fact, as—when the Ambassador was out in Ambar province, they increased the budget of Anbar province, a Sunni Arab province, a Shia government—Shia-majority government did that.

There is no general amnesty law. There is, actually, though, conditional immunity. That's the only description of what happens when former insurgents from a place like Abu Ghraib—Sunni Arab, but right next to a Shia—a Sunni-Shia fault line—are allowed to attend the Iraqi police academy, where they will graduate, some number of them, on the 10th of this month, and others from another location. That's a very significant step. And, candidly, that is what gives some encouragement. There are a number of examples of this, where the big law—the national reconciliation has not taken place, but there are steps just happening, there are actions being taken, that give you hope that they can, indeed, reconcile with one another, accommodate one another, and so forth.

We have worked very hard with the local peace. That is now supported by the Iraqis. We have a senior diplomat, a two-star British general, on the force—or the engagement cell. And Prime Minister Maliki has formed a National Reconciliation Committee that works with that cell to try to connect the national-level actions to move,

for example, local volunteers on to the rolls of the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defense forces, so they're paid nationally, then. As you know, there's no local funding for police. And that is happening. That's what happened in Anbar province, and that's what gives some confidence that these tribes—you know, certainly we applauded when they turned their weapons, instead of on us, on al-Qaeda. We have not armed them, by the way. We have not—we don't have weapons to give to tribes, or something like that. We have funded some of them for periods, and then they have been moved onto the rolls of these national ministries. That means that they're in a chain of command that extends to the top. It means that the budget is paid by the center; in this case, a Sunni Arab Minister of Defense, but a Shia Minister of Interior has hired now, again, over—some 20,000 or so police in Anbar province alone. That's the type of activity that gives me some encouragement, even though, as the chairman correctly quoted from my letter to the troops, they have not met—it has not worked out the way we had hoped with respect to the national legislation, but there have been these other activities that have given us some cause for hope.

Senator DODD. Can I just quickly ask you—that young soldier at Walter Reed, are his views commonly held views about the cooperation from the——

General PETRAEUS. Sir, it——

Senator DODD [continuing]. Iraqi population?

General PETRAEUS. I mean, you—there's 165,000 different views on the ground. And if you go to Anbar province right now, they feel as if they have—you know, they're in the loving arms of their Sunni Arab citizens who shot at them, you know, 6, 8 months ago. And it does change. There's no question about it. And you can walk around the map, and you could say, looking at it, literally, this is where they'll help you, this is where they won't. The fact is that we are getting a lot more help. I mean, that's the only explanation for the fact that we now have 4,400 weapons caches. We may actually have doubled the number that we got all of last year. And they're pretty substantial ones, and quite a few of them, in fact, are materials that would have been put into car bombs and so forth.

Senator DODD. Thank you.

General PETRAEUS. Thank you, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Hagel.

Senator HAGEL. Mr. Chairman, thank you. Gentlemen, welcome.

As Senator Dodd and others have noted this morning, every American is proud of the service of our American military and those who are serving, in whatever capacity, in a very difficult situation in Iraq. And we should not at all confuse the sense of support and the gratitude that all Americans have for your leadership and your service.

That said, we just—as you—each have responsibilities. We are elected by the people of our States. To question strategy is not unpatriotic.

Now, with that said, Ambassador, General, when you look at—and I know you have—the preceding reports that we have talked about today and you have added to with information, numbers—General Jones's report, the General Accountability report—I spent some time with Stuart Bowen, the IG for Iraqi Reconstruction—the

latest National Intelligence Estimate; Anthony Cordesman's latest report—threaded throughout those reports, and then listening carefully to what the two of you have said this morning, are some very bright-line contradictions.

Let's start with the one that almost everyone that I'm aware of has said the core issue is—the most important issue—and that is political reconciliation. And I have quotes from you, General Petraeus, and you, Ambassador Crocker, from the President. Every senior member of our Government involved in our policy and our strategy in Iraq all agree, as you said, General Petraeus, there will be no military solution in Iraq.

Now, when you look at the reports—let's start with the question I asked the Comptroller General last week, when I asked him his analysis of the current Iraqi Government. Is it a functioning government? And his response to me was, "At best, it is dysfunctional."

Now, you may disagree with that. But when you take the sum-total analysis of these reports that we've looked at, they lead us to a pretty clear conclusion, that, in fact, this Government in Iraq is dysfunctional. And, when you add further to what the Chief of Staff to the United States Army had to say—General Casey—about tactical effects of surges and how minimal they are, and how they will—as Admiral Fallon has said, "No amount of time will make—or troops—will make much difference unless there is a political reconciliation"—I doubt if you—either of you disagree with that analysis. If you do, please tell the committee why. The other part of this is—it seems to me logical—that when you flood a zone with more troops, when you put more troops in Baghdad, or Anbar province, you're going to see some consequence to that, you're going to see some result. So, I don't think that that's particularly news, that where we have inserted more American troops, costing more American lives, we've seen some differences. But, just as one of the most flawed dynamics of our policy invading Iraq 4½ years ago, is, we never had enough troops, we still don't have enough troops. So, it seems to be logical that it would follow. But when you look at the southern part of Iraq, which I noted neither one of you noted today, one of the senior members of General Jones's task force said to me, when he returned, "We've probably lost southern Iraq." And I said, "You must be kidding?" He said, "No." He said, "The four provinces of southern Iraq are gone, they are lawless, there's no Iraqi national army down there, the police are corrupt"—as indicated in General Jones's report, incidentally, as well as others—"the British used to have 40,000 troops in Iraq. As you all know, they are at about 5,000. They're huddled in the airport in Basrah. What I was told, by not just this individual from General Jones's group, but other reports, intelligence reports and other reports I get—actually, the newspaper—is, lawless gangs of marauders, of Shia militia, are in charge in Basrah and those four provinces. As you both know, two governors have been assassinated in the last 2 months. I was told, by one individual who has been down there recently, that we are essentially paying tribute to these people to keep open the port.

Now, the contradictions, in my mind, Ambassador and General, as much as you want to put a good picture on this, and that's partly, I understand, your job, and I understand it's your responsi-

bility, and I don't question—you believe exactly what you've come before this committee to say—but I have to ask this question. Where is this going? Now, let's don't get down into the underbrush of the 18 benchmarks. And, by the way, let's clear some of the record on that. Those 18 benchmarks didn't come from the Congress of the United States; those benchmarks came from the Iraqi Government and this administration. Somehow it's, "The Congress dictated these benchmarks." Well, we didn't. We didn't. Well, let's not argue about who's got better numbers or better numbers in the context of more frequent numbers. Let's get above the underbrush and look at the strategic context, which, essentially, we have never done. That's not your fault, General. It's not Ambassador Crocker's fault. It's this administration's fault. We have never, ever looked at Iraq from the larger strategic context of—not of Iraq only, but Iran, Syria, and the Middle East.

Now, where is this going to go? Because the question that is going to continue to be asked—and you all know it, and you have to live with it—and when you ask questions, as we all do, about, "Is it worth it, the continued investment of American blood and treasure?"—when Senator Dodd presents to you the evaluation of one lowly enlisted man—and, by the way, I assume you read the New York Times piece, 2 weeks ago—seven NCOs in Iraq today, finishing up 15-month commitments. Are we going to dismiss those seven NCOs? Are they ignorant? They laid out a pretty different scenario, General, Ambassador, from what you're laying out today. Senator Biden said to me once—I think, on our first trip to Iraq—he turned around, and I was gone, and he said, "Where did Senator Hagel go?" He found me out talking to the guys in the jeep, the corporals and the sergeants who have to do the dying and the fighting. I've always found it—you want an honest evaluation, not through charts, not through the White House evaluations—you ask a sergeant or a corporal what they think. I'll bet on them every time, as I know you will, General, I know you will.

Now, where is this going? We've got too many disconnects here, General, way too many disconnects. Are we going to dismiss the five reports that I just noted?

I would say to you, Ambassador, one of your quotes—"If we don't be careful, we're going to see Iraq devolve into a civil war." Come on. Our national intelligence report, earlier this year, said we're in a civil war, that they're—it's sectarian violence. But yet, you said that in your testimony this morning. You gave us a great inventory of what a brutal, bloody dictator Saddam was. Well, we know that. That's not the issue here. Are we going to continue to invest American blood and treasure at the same rate we're doing now—for what? The President said, "Let's buy time." Buy time? For what? Every report I've seen—and I assume both of you agree with this—there's been, really, very little, if any, political process that is the ultimate core issue, political reconciliation in Iraq.

I know my time is up, but I would appreciate, Mr. Chairman, if I could get an answer with—from these two gentlemen on that question.

Thank you.

Ambassador CROCKER. Thank you, Senator. I'll just touch very briefly on the key and critical points you raise here.

There is an enormous amount of dysfunctionality in Iraq. That is beyond question. The government, in many respects, is dysfunctional, and members of the government know it. There is a lot of discontent about that, in and out of government. And, if you will, that's some qualified good news. People who previously espoused a strict sectarian or ethnic line, and how positions were apportioned, for example, are now saying, "This isn't working." That's part of the debate in Iraq, and a fairly common part of the debate. The application is going to be a lot more difficult, but Iraqis are talking about precisely that kind of dysfunctionality.

A second point I'd make is on security and violence. Iraq, in my judgment, almost completely unraveled in 2006 and the very beginning of 2007, as sectarian violence after February 2006 just spiraled up. Under those conditions, it is extremely difficult—it is impossible—to proceed with effective governance or an effective process of national reconciliation. It's just in the last couple of months that those levels of violence have come down in a measurable way.

And we can have lots of debates about what measure is used, but the one that, as a Foreign Service officer, that I take the most seriously is the perception among Iraq's leaders, all the main communities, that the security situation has improved. That gives you an environment when you can start working on meaningful national reconciliation. And that's why I placed an emphasis, in my statement, on the need for Iraqis to work out these fundamental questions that are as yet unresolved. What is this state going to look like? What is the relation between the provinces and the center, the provinces and each other? That's still unresolved. Now they're starting to get the space to work on it.

What I do point to as a moderately encouraging factor is that, when security does improve, as we saw in Anbar, political life starts up again. For example, in Anbar now every significant town has a municipal council, has an elected mayor. That was not the case 6 months ago. We have also seen provinces and the center connecting to each other. And if there is one thing where the government is showing some functionality on, in marked difference to last year, it's distributing revenues. Provincial budgets are being funded, and they're being funded in a reasonably equitable way. We do not hear from the Sunnis that they're getting shortchanged, for example. So, that suggests to me that, at a minimum now, we've got an environment developing—not fully developed, but developing—with violence at low enough levels where a meaningful discussion on national reconciliation can take place. That's now what needs to happen.

General PETRAEUS. Senator, first of all, with respect, my responsibility, as I see it, is not to give a good picture, it's to give an accurate picture, as forthright a picture as I can provide. And that is what I've tried to do.

Second, we will—certainly will not be at the same rate of forces. What I—if the recommendations are approved, as I mentioned, the Marine expeditionary unit, 2,000-plus, will be coming out this month, and we'll then draw down one-quarter of our ground combat brigades and two additional Marine battalions.

The CHAIRMAN. General, point of clarification, excuse me. Was that——

General PETRAEUS. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN [continuing]. Expeditionary force—was there—they were scheduled to come out anyway, right?

General PETRAEUS. Sir, they are scheduled to come out, but I could have easily requested——

The CHAIRMAN. No, no; I understand.

General PETRAEUS [continuing]. An extension of them. And——

The CHAIRMAN. You could have.

General PETRAEUS [continuing]. In fact, we were—I considered that. We did request an extension earlier, and that was granted. And, in fact—so, we are now——

The CHAIRMAN. Excuse me again, factually——

General PETRAEUS [continuing]. Allowing them to go home.

The CHAIRMAN [continuing]. They're—you extended them to 15 months?

General PETRAEUS. No, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. How——

General PETRAEUS. This is a MEU, that was in—a float MEU, came ashore a couple months ago, was extended on the ground, just to continue the work—they're working north of Fallujah, cleaning up a pocket of al-Qaeda—allow the Iraqi Army to go in there and to replace them in that area. And they will now go home, without replacement. The key is "without replacement," actually. They're—the MEU is scheduled to rotate out, and that was going to happen, but we're not asking for the Central Command strategic reserve. Again, that's the point.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you for the clarification.

General PETRAEUS. And then, as I mentioned, the other forces.

Another important point, Senator, is that many of the positive developments have not just been a result of additional forces. Some cases, they have. There's neighborhoods in Baghdad where we are sitting on a sectarian fault line, trying to stabilize it to stop the eating that continues, it—literally, just this sectarian violence that never stops until it—the area is stabilized. And there are some neighborhoods where we are, indeed, trying to do that. The seven sergeants are in one such neighborhood.

But, in a number of cases, the progress is not just because of more forces sitting on a problem, it's the result of a fundamental change on the ground. Nowhere is that more visible, obviously, than Anbar province, where—and this bears out the whole idea that it is about political change—what happened in Anbar is politics. It was the result of tribes, sheikhs, saying, "No more," to al-Qaeda. That's a political decision, to oppose an organization with which they were at least tacitly in league, and perhaps supporting. And that has happened in other areas, now, as well. In Diyala province, a very, very challenging area, mixed ethnic—in fact, Sunni, Shia, and Kurd—the sheikhs have come together there and said, "We reject extremism of any form," including, therefore, Shia militia extremism. And the government, and we, are trying to figure out how to help them, how to build on that, how to use that to augment, to reinforce, build on the success that our soldiers and Iraqi forces achieved in clearing Baqubah of al-Qaeda, to then hold

it and continue that effort with the support, again, of the tribes. And that is hugely important, because that is a shift. Sunni Arabs, by and large in Iraq for a number of years, were supportive, at the least—at least tacitly, again—to al-Qaeda because of their feelings of dispossession, disrespect, unemployment, and a variety of other reasons. And that's an important development, that's an important phenomenon that we obviously want to work very hard to reinforce, while ensuring that we still tie it in to the center sufficiently so that it doesn't create additional problems down the road.

We're talking about, really, sort of finding who are the irreconcilables, and trying to isolate them, and then to help the Iraqi Government to bring the reconcilables—to become part of the solution, instead of part of the problem. And that is what has happened, again, most notably, in Anbar, but is applicable, to some degree, in other areas, as well.

Thank you, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Kerry.

Senator KERRY. Thank you.

Ambassador Crocker, General Petraeus, thank you very much for being here today, and, more importantly, thank you both, and thanks to all of the diplomatic service and the troops, for their remarkable sacrifices on our behalf. We are enormously grateful—and respectful, for their duty and sacrifice.

I would like to ask you both a couple of questions, and that's difficult, given the timeframes, so let me try to frame them, put them in a context, and then let you answer.

But, first of all, this is a historic moment. Not since the country heard from General Westmoreland, almost 40 years ago, has an active-duty general played such an important role in the national debate with respect to security strategy. So, this is different and significant. But I also will remind you, and those who are following this discussion, that almost half the names that found their way etched into the Vietnam Wall after Westmoreland's testimony found their way there when our leaders had acknowledged, in retrospect, that they knew the policy was not working, and would not work. And all you need do to underline this chilling fact is read Defense Secretary McNamara's books and other histories of that period.

So, obviously, we dare not repeat those mistakes now, and that's why these judgments are so critical. Our troops are owed nothing less than a policy worthy of their high sacrifice. And our country is owed a policy that meets our needs, our national interest, and one that ultimately can get the job done. What I fear, as I hear these analyses, is that we are passing by the strategic, larger issues here, and finding ourselves dealing with statistics and analysis that may have meaning as to one location or one conceptualization, but doesn't have meaning as to the larger question of the strategic reconciliation necessary, the makings of inherently political decisions. For all of your efforts, General, for all of the efforts of our troops, they can't make the Iraqis make the decisions that they must.

So, one question is this: Is it acceptable that young Americans are dying and being grievously wounded while Iraqi politicians delay and delay—and again delay—meeting their own standards?

Second, in the south, as Senator Hagel has mentioned: Is it acceptable that the British redeploy to an air base and leave four southeastern provinces, where 30 percent of the Iraqi population is and 80 percent of the oil revenues are, and then leave it to local militia to fundamentally fight it out under Iranian influence? If that is acceptable, then why is it not acceptable to other parts of the country? And if such a scenario is not acceptable, what are we going to do about it?

Third question, to Ambassador Crocker, with respect to reconciliation and diplomacy: It must be emphasized that 15 months after the Maliki government has come to power, that its commitments are not being met. This is not something Congress put forward, it's not something the administration dreamt up. It is the Iraqis who said to us, "Measure us by these benchmarks." And here we are now, after the escalation of forces, making that measurement. Why is it not appropriate that they should be held to their own standards? And isn't it, in fact, moving goal posts to suggest, "Well, we're not really going to look at the benchmarks themselves, we're instead going to look at the activity underneath and find out whether or not that is adequate"? It clearly is not adequate when the fundamental issue is: How long can you continue to ask our troops to make these kinds of sacrifices, when you don't have the necessary fundamentals of political accommodation?

Now, you've pointed to Anbar province, but you have to show us how that is relevant to accommodation nationally, because every indicator points to a narrative that Anbari sheikhs decided they were tired of having their daughters raped, their sons beheaded, their businesses undermined, and their towns blown up by al-Qaeda, and they've made an accommodation with us, not with the national accommodation, in order to avoid that from happening. That makes sense. But, in the end, if we've armed them and trained them, and there is no national reconciliation, have we simply made more complicated the question of how you resolve the civil war that is ongoing?

The only way this is resolved is through such accommodation. When the war started, Baghdad was 65 percent Sunni. Today, Baghdad is 75-or-so percent Shia. And one of the many reasons the violence is down is because there's been this enormous dislocation of the population, the middle class has left, and some would say that a kind of partition has already taken place.

So, help us, please, Mr. Ambassador, to understand. How then are you not moving the goal posts? Why should we not hold the Iraqi Government itself accountable to its own standards? And why will there be any indication that accommodation will now effectively take place, when you've said you're going to leave 130,000 troops, which is where we were last year, when Iraq almost fell apart. That's what you're telling the American people. We'll be there next year and next summer, and, having told that to the Iraqis, what's the leverage to make them make the decisions they've been unwilling to make to this moment?

Three questions.

Ambassador CROCKER. If I could start, again, I think we all agree—we clearly agree—that the essence of the issue here is national reconciliation, political reconciliation. I think, at the same

time, we've got to acknowledge the clear linkage between security conditions, levels of violence, and the capacity of people in an environment to move meaningfully toward reconciliation. Those security conditions—those necessary security preconditions—simply have not existed over the last year and a half. I agree, completely, that the country almost came apart completely in the course of 2006.

Senator KERRY. With 130,000 troops there.

Ambassador CROCKER. And that process is what led to the recommendations of our predecessors, that we needed to assume a role of population security, and that's what we're now doing. And it is making a difference. But it's going to take time. It's not just a switch that you flip, that, as the surge starts to make a real difference at the beginning of the summer, that then everyone is prepared to sit down and make historic compromises. That is going to take time and effort.

Will it succeed? How fast will it succeed? In what form will it succeed? I don't know. I do agree very much with Senator Lugar on this issue of benchmarks. The benchmarks are important, and they are Iraqi. But, at the same time, we've got to maintain enough strategic and tactical flexibility here, I think, to recognize when things are happening that may be moving toward reconciliation that doesn't line up exactly with a benchmark, which is why I talked, as did General Petraeus, about the things going on with amnesty, with de factor de-Baathification reform, some of the other issues related to benchmarks. We've got to find ways to identify and encourage those things.

So, again, it's not simply an issue of a government and a leadership that is dithering, incapable, unwilling. It is a set of circumstances that, for the last year and a half, have made meaningful reconciliation somewhere between very hard and outright impossible. Those conditions are changing. Now they're going to have to move ahead to take advantage of the time and the space. But the time and the space is really just—it's really just starting in the course of this summer. It's not something they have been squandering over the last year or more.

In terms of Anbar—and not to overemphasize this one particular province, but there are things there that are of broader significance, and I think it is important to understand them—it isn't at all only about us and the Anbaris. That has been a key element of our focus since the beginning of this process, to ensure that what happens in Anbar is linked to the center in ways that are agreeable to both the center and the province. That's why the 21,000 young Anbaris who have come aboard as police officers, and who graduated, I guess, yesterday—that's why that's important. The central government has them on the central government's payroll to maintain security in their own province. That's why the readiness of the government—the central government—to provide additional resources to the province to meet its reconstruction needs and to pay compensation is also important. So, you're seeing a process working in Anbar that, obviously, is important, in and of itself, but it's also important in the way the two entities—the province and the center—have managed to establish some working linkages.

Can that be replicated? No; it can't be done so in a cookie-cutter fashion, but, in Diyala, a much more complex situation—Kurd, Shia, Sunni, all intermingled there—we're seeing some of the same phenomenon, a rejection of radicals, a desire to get on with reconstruction and development, an expectation of the central government to support that. So, that, to me, is the stage for, at least, a reconciliation process that may actually mean something, and I think we've got to—we've got to follow it and encourage it.

General PETRAEUS. Senator, I won't repeat what the Ambassador just said, but—I do want to talk about the south—but, first, with respect to this local accommodation that is taking place—really, conditional immunity again—we are seeing that, even in Baghdad neighborhoods. For example, Ghazaliyah, Amiriyah, and Adhamiyah, all were al-Qaeda strongholds, as little as just a few months ago. Ottomiyah has just begun turning, in the last month or so, but, already, local volunteers are coming forward. And, again, the key with that is to make sure that it is tied in to the central government through the national reconciliation committee that they have set up, so that they become legitimate security force members and not the fixed-site security elements that we have literally hired them to be in the interim to help maintain the momentum against al-Qaeda in those area, because those have changed completely, those particular areas.

Senator KERRY. I know my time is up, and I don't want to abuse it, but I will say, General, that the main issue is not Iraqi versus al-Qaeda, because everyone has had confidence that they didn't want foreign jihadists, and that they would be kicked out, at one time or another. The main issue is reconciliation.

General PETRAEUS. Well, again, the local accommodation that is represented by the Iraqi Government, a Shia-majority government—Prime Minister Maliki's office—Reconciliation Committee—enabling these individuals to be hired—to be trained and hired in the Ministry of Interior, for example, that's what I'm really getting at. And that is reconciliation. It may not be the reconciliation law. Candidly, that is what gives me, again, some hope.

The CHAIRMAN. General, isn't the truth, though—just get this fact about—isn't it true that the reason why you got this deal is, the Anbaris weren't going to allow any national police in their streets? What you did is, you made a deal. They're paying for their own cops. It wasn't until you guys said, "You can hire your own. Go out there, tribal chiefs, tell your sons to join. We'll guarantee only—only Sunnis will be here in your neighborhood." Isn't that what happened?

General PETRAEUS. Well, Senator, again, the idea here is that local police should be local. There were not local police in the past, because they didn't have the courage to raise their hand. We had to close the police academy in Anbar province, over 2 years ago, and just reopened it about 2 months ago. There were no volunteers. It didn't matter what you said. We wanted volunteers for the Iraqi Army and the local police in Anbar, and they stopped raising their hand, about 2 years ago, when so many of them had their families killed, kidnaped, tortured, and so forth, and they themselves were treated the same way.

So, it took, really, sort of a critical mass of tribal leaders, joining with our forces that were augmented at that time, to clear a place like Ramadi. Ramadi was not going to be cleared by tribes alone. It took hard combat fighting in cities, urban combat, and it was tough. But it is now clear, and they are now very much invested in keeping it clear. And, again, having local police is a concept that we had tried to do, for years in Iraq, but were unsuccessful in doing, because we couldn't get Sunni Arabs to stay in the force.

Now, with respect to solutions in the Shia south, there are four provinces in Multinational Division–Southeast. Two of those are doing fine, frankly. Muthanna province, even though the governor was assassinated, we're pretty certain by militia extremists, continues to stay fine. They will have a new governor. They'll work out OK. And there are no coalition forces whatsoever in Muthanna province. It went to provincial Iraqi control last year. That's—that has the capital of Samawah. Dhi Qar province, which has Nasiriyah, there have been efforts by militia extremists to take on the legitimate—and, by the way, again, in Muthanna, it's legitimate Iraqi security forces—army elements and police—that are providing the security there—very, very low level of violence, until this recent assassination of the governor. In Dhi Qar province, the capital of Nasiriyah, we have a single U.S. Special Forces team. There's an Australian battalion focused primarily on civil-military operations. And, again, that province, doing, really, quite well. And those forces there are led by—you know, again, this comes down to leadership, and when you find a good Iraqi leader—Colonel Abu Likah, who's been wounded a couple of time, and—but his forces have stood up, very much, to the militia extremists, and even pursued them beyond Nasariyah to neighboring cities. And then, they all—then the tribes get together, and there's some negotiations. But that is—that's OK. That is an Iraqi solution that works in the Shia south. These solutions are not necessarily transferable, however, to mixed areas or others.

With respect to another province down there, Maysan province—that's the marsh Arabs—Maysan province has never been controlled by any Iraqi Government. It's not been controlled in the past few years, really. I mean, again, the marsh Arabs are going to do what the marsh Arabs are going to do. And that's really what they have been doing—it's provincial Iraqi control, a few months ago. And they'll come to their Iraqi solutions.

Basrah province, very, very important to Iraq, of course. The ports, the oil, and all the rest of that all flow through there. The British did a good handoff to a force that was trained and equipped and certified to hand off the palace. They had, earlier, handed off the logistical base and other bases, consolidating at the airport. They have a number of important tasks there. In fact, I will go home—or, you know, go—it is home now, Iraq—I'll go back to Iraq through London and talk to them with the Ministry of Defense and the Prime Minister, to discuss the tasks and make sure we have a common site picture on that.

Beyond that, Prime Minister Maliki put a pretty strong—a very strong four-star general down there as the Basrah Operations Command commander, several months ago. That has already had a salutary effect. There's no question but that there is a competition

down there between the Fadhila Party, the Supreme Council, the Badr Corps, and, certainly, Sadr's Party and militia. Interestingly, there have been deals there recently, and the violence level has just flat plummeted. It's included some release of some Jaysh al-Mahdi figures, and, again, accommodations between all of them.

Again, for the Shia south, that's probably OK. These are Iraqi solutions for Iraqi problems. The problem is that that does not necessarily transfer to a province that has mixed ethnosectarian identities, such as Diyala, Baghdad, or some of the others.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, General.

General PETRAEUS. Thank you, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Coleman.

Senator COLEMAN. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker, first, thank you for your extraordinary service.

General, I will say to you that I found the attacks on your credibility—personal attacks by MoveOn.org—to be really despicable. And I would hope that it would be roundly rejected. We need to put the politics aside in this issue, if we can, listen to your troops on the ground, try to figure out the way forward.

I had a chance, when I was in Ramadi, about 9 days ago, to listen to some of those troops on the ground. One of them was Captain Marcus Maine. He was at the Joint Security Station, right in Ramadi. And Marines were good, not just at killing foreign fighters and al-Qaeda, but he was rebuilding a town. He had bulletin boards in the neighborhoods, and he had a loudspeaker system to, at times, play the Iraqi national anthem. It was—he was rebuilding a city. As a former mayor, it—I understood what he was trying to do. I met with the mayor of Ramadi, who was talking about—they've got Lake Habbaniyah there, and he's talking about, you know, a resort area. Well, every one of his buildings are filled with bullet holes. That's a long-term vision. And that's my—you know, I appreciate the hope, but then here's the concern. Ambassador Crocker, you talk about, "It's going to take time, it's going to take time." Between now and next March or April, there are going to be ups and downs in Iraq. There, you know, may be more folks who pull out of the government. I suspect we'll see efforts by al-Qaeda—and they have the ability—to commit massive violence, massive violence there. They may be on the run, but they're clearly not out.

And so, as we, kind of, listen to the American people on this issue, what I think we do need, what we don't even have now, in spite of this testimony, is—Ambassador, to you—objective measures of progress. It's one thing to say that, "Well, benchmarks aren't an end to themselves," but can you offer us—can we lay on the table something that—so that when we have the next downturn, when we have the next pullout, when we have the next, you know, fissure between Sunni and Shia, that we at least have some objective measures to say that we are on a path to progress. This is about—we're talking about reconciliation—it's about power-sharing. It's power-sharing. It's reconciliation, perhaps, between Sunni and Shia. It's power between—in Baghdad, it's power-sharing between central government and Baghdad; in Anbar—and it's power-sharing, in the southern provinces, between Shia and Shia. So, that's the—so, for you, my question would be: Can you offer us—

can we put on the table objective measures that we can then look at and come back to when things get shaky, to determine: Are we on a course to success?

And, General, for you, it would be perhaps the same thing. Americans want to see light at the end of the tunnel. And it's one thing to say—and I applaud the troop drawdown this year, I applaud the fact that we'll be at presurge levels next year. But, again, because there are going to be these attacks, there are going to be these things that clearly undermine American confidence that we are, in fact, continuing with progress, we need to see some plan out there.

The Peace Institute had a—which was composed of many of the folks involved in the Iraqi Study Group—they had—they came out with something the other day that said, we could, you know, get down to half the number of troops we have now in 3 years, a total turning over of bases in 5 years. They don't say it, but I suspect you'd have to have the United Nations in there. We're going to be in Iraq a long time. But, much as we're in Kosovo, it doesn't have to be America fighting the fight for the Iraqis. So, General, is it—for you, can we get a longer term vision? Can we get a longer term plan? Can we say that—yeah, we can be down to half our troops in 3 years, we can get to 5 years, we can be turning over our bases and some other paradigm—but I think we need something a little more than, say, "Give us more time to come back again in the fall."

So, Ambassador, if you could respond, and, General, if you could respond.

Ambassador CROCKER. Thank you, Senator.

What I look to are the continuation or initiation of processes—again, more than fixed decisions. Because I—benchmarks go two ways, in my view, as a potential misleading indicators, and one of them is—I believe that Iraqis could hit all the benchmarks and still not achieve national reconciliation. So, how can we better define what national reconciliation looks like, if it's there or if it's not there?

I think we've already got processes out there that we can keep an eye on and see if the Iraqis are able to further expand them in the months ahead. The association, again, between the central government and the provinces—is the central government able to increase its ability to support provincial efforts at reconstruction and rebuilding? And are the provinces, if they get the resources, able to execute budgets on behalf of their citizenry? Because an awful lot of this is about resources, services, equitable distributions. So, that's one.

That presupposes—and this, I think, is crucial—that levels of violence stay down, and go down further. As General Petraeus said in his opening remarks, this has been an ethnosectarian competition for power and resources. The question now—the critical question for Iraqis, and, ultimately, for ourselves—is whether, under changing conditions, the competition, before it, hopefully, evolves into something that is not purely ethnic-sectarian based—whether that competition increasingly translates into a political, as opposed to a political competition, as opposed to a street fight. So, I think that's going to be key.

A third element that I would look at is one that several of your colleagues have alluded to, and that's the militias. Is the central

government, with our support, as necessary and appropriate, able to begin taking apart the militias? As I mentioned, we've seen some early promising indication of a popular backlash against Jaysh al-Mahdi. You know, does that translate into popular intolerance for Jaysh al-Mahdi among Shia communities, sort of, as we saw among Sunni communities, with respect to al-Qaeda? And if so—and even if not—is the government increasingly able to take on these militias?

So, that would be three, kind of, interlinked areas that I'm certainly going to have my eye on as we move forward.

And, you know, there are, kind of, subpoints. Population displacements, they have slowed, as far as I can tell, but they haven't stopped. They need to stop, and then they need to begin to reverse. That would be an indication, also, obviously, of an advancing national reconciliation process, and it's something that one can point to that is, to some degree, measurable.

So, that's what I would offer, at this point.

Senator COLEMAN. Thank you.

General.

General PETRAEUS. Well, Senator, first of all, I very much agree with your assessment of al-Qaeda–Iraq. That organization—terrorist organization is off balance, but it remains very dangerous. We know that it is trying to reignite ethnosectarian violence, in the way that it did in February 2006 with the bombing of the Golden Dome Mosque in Samarra. They tried it again, as you'll recall, several months ago, and took down the minarets of that mosque. And it probably would have gotten out of hand again, had it not been for the unified and swift response by government—of Iraqi leaders of all ethnosectarian groupings, standing together, literally, and denouncing it, calling for calm, and so forth, and also very swift action by the Ministry of Defense and Interior and the Prime Minister, in fact, literally flying there, personally, standing on the ground, ordering some reinforcements and so forth, and rapidly carrying that out.

But there's no question, we see the intel that al-Qaeda is trying to open new fronts in certain locations. They've been run out of a lot of areas. They've been killed or captured in substantial numbers, but they remain a very, very dangerous foe, an adaptable foe, and one that, again, wants to retain sanctuaries in Iraq and to continue to inflict enormous death and destruction on the Iraqi people.

Now, looking to the future, you saw the final chart that I used, that showed a stairstep—although the timing of that is to be determined, as I mentioned, that is—that reflects—that does reflect our sense of how we would like this to play out, both in terms of reductions of forces over time, and the shift of the missions, going increasingly from leading, again, to partnering, to the various forms of overwatch as we transition responsibilities to Iraqi forces. The fact is, we are already in that mix. We have already literally handed off certain provinces completely, as I mentioned, several in the south. We'll hand off Karbala, here, in about a month or so, as well, and then others over time. And then, in other cases, we have shifted to various forms of partnering, but still, certainly, in some of the very tough neighborhoods, in Baghdad, in particular, still in the lead or partnering.

The CHAIRMAN. General, I hate to interrupt you, but let me suggest to my colleagues that the method of using your 5 minutes to ask 10 minutes' worth of responses is never going to get us to the end here.

So, General, thank you for your answer.

Senator Feingold.

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

And thank you both for testifying here today. Ambassador, I want to thank you for all the time you've given me over the years, especially when we were in Pakistan, and your briefings on that critical country. And General, on both occasions that I was in Iraq, the time you spent helping me understand these variety of issues—I, too, thank you for your service.

But, Mr. Chairman, it is simply tragic that, 6 years to the day after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, our attention is so focused on what has been the greatest mistake in the fight against al-Qaeda, and that's the Iraq war. Both yesterday at the House hearings, and today, there has been virtually no reference by either the Members of Congress or the witnesses to the broader context outside of Iraq. I strongly supported the decision to go to war in Afghanistan, which served as a sanctuary for al-Qaeda. The war in Iraq has been a terrible diversion from Afghanistan and from what should be a global fight against a global enemy.

As this summer's declassified NIE confirmed, al-Qaeda remains the most serious threat to the United States, and key elements of that threat have been regenerated, or even enhanced. While our attention and resources have been focused on Iraq, al-Qaeda has protected its safe haven in Pakistan and increased cooperation with regional terrorist groups.

So, the question we must answer is not whether we are winning or losing in Iraq, but whether Iraq is helping or hurting our efforts to defeat al-Qaeda. That is the lesson of 9/11, and it's a lesson we must remember today and, I would say, every single day.

And in that vein, this past July, President Bush referred to al-Qaeda more than 90 times in a single speech about Iraq and has repeatedly called Iraq "the central front" or "the key theater" in the war on terror. But this is misleading, at best, as is the effort to suggest that al-Qaeda is the primary driver of violence in Iraq.

While AQI may give al-Qaeda an extended reach, our extreme focus on Iraq, I think, prevents us from adequately addressing the global nature of al-Qaeda and from targeting sufficient resources—whether they're military, diplomatic, intelligence, or financial—to other parts of the world where al-Qaeda is operating.

Now, Senator Hagel mentioned some of the other places. He mentioned Iran, he mentioned Syria, he mentioned the Middle East, but what about Africa? Last week, for example, two bombs exploded in Algeria, killing more than 50 people and wounding scores more. Both explosions were virtually unnoticed here in the United States, as were the ones that exploded in the same region this past April and that were claimed by, as you both know, another al-Qaeda affiliate, known as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.

So, I'd like to ask, first, General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker: Do you believe that the United States is providing suffi-

cient resources to address the threat posed by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb?

Ambassador.

Ambassador CROCKER. Senator, frankly, that takes me a little bit beyond my area of expertise. I don't focus on the Maghreb. I could say a few things, based on my 2½ years in Pakistan. And, of course, I went directly from Pakistan to Iraq in March. The presence of al-Qaeda in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border area is a major challenge to us. And I——

Senator FEINGOLD. How concerned are you about al-Qaeda safe haven in Pakistan?

Ambassador CROCKER. We're all quite concerned.

Senator FEINGOLD. But which is more important to defeating al-Qaeda: The situation in Pakistan or the situation in Iraq, Ambassador?

Ambassador CROCKER. I'd say just one——

Ambassador CROCKER. That's surely within your expertise——

Ambassador CROCKER. Yes, sir.

Ambassador CROCKER [continuing]. Since you've been the Ambassador to one and the Ambassador to the other.

Ambassador CROCKER. Yes, sir; which is why I'm addressing this. The challenges in confronting al-Qaeda in the Pak-Afghan border area are immense, and they're complicated. I did not feel, from my perspective as Ambassador to Pakistan, that the focus, the resources, the people needed to deal with that situation weren't available or weren't there because of Iraq.

Senator FEINGOLD. What's more important, though, to fighting al-Qaeda, the situation in Pakistan or the situation in Iraq?

Ambassador CROCKER. Senator, in my view, fighting al-Qaeda is what's important, whatever front they're on. Fighting al-Qaeda in Pakistan is critically important to us——

Senator FEINGOLD. But, Ambassador, surely——

Ambassador CROCKER [continuing]. Fighting al-Qaeda in——

Senator FEINGOLD [continuing]. Surely——

Ambassador CROCKER [continuing]. Iraq is critically——

Senator FEINGOLD [continuing]. Surely in a war——

Ambassador CROCKER [continuing]. Important to us.

Senator FEINGOLD [continuing]. You have to have priorities. Some are more important than others.

I'd like to ask the General his response. What about the situation that we find in North Africa and the other regions? You obviously must take this into account in thinking about your role in Iraq.

General PETRAEUS. I am not in a position to comment on the resources we've committed to the Maghreb or to other areas. General McCrystal does brief us, about once a week, on the overall situation, but it is clearly with a focus to how that is affecting al-Qaeda in Iraq.

For what it's worth, he, the commander of the Joint Special Operations Command, and the CIA Director, when I talked to them a couple of months ago, agreed that their belief is that al-Qaeda–Central sees al-Qaeda in Iraq as their central front in their global war on terror. That seems confirmed by the communications that we periodically see between al-Qaeda–Central and al-Qaeda–Iraq, although that could be changing as a result of the loss of momen-

tum, to some degree, by al-Qaeda—Iraq, and it's something that we need to keep an eye on, clearly. There's a——

Senator FEINGOLD. Well, with all due respect, these two critical leaders here in our government, who I have great respect for, are not willing to seriously comment about how this relates to the larger global fight against terrorism, the allocation of resources. This is a classic example of myopia. This is the myopia of Iraq that is affecting our ability to look at this as the global challenge it is.

And, by the way, General, I'd like to know: When will the level of American troops' deaths start to seriously decline in Iraq?

General PETRAEUS. First of all, if I could just come back to your earlier comment, with respect, Senator, what this is, is an example of a commander focused on his area of responsibility, and that is my mission. It is to accomplish the military tasks that are associated with this policy, not to fight the overall global war on terror.

Senator FEINGOLD. I respect that, and I understand that, but I guess where I'm coming——

General PETRAEUS. With respect——

Senator FEINGOLD [continuing]. Is the broader context, here, of our discussions, that this is the most——

General PETRAEUS. Sure.

Senator FEINGOLD [continuing]. Critical hearing we've had, and yet it's only about Iraq. But go ahead and please answer the question.

General PETRAEUS. Well——

Senator FEINGOLD. When can we expect the troop deaths to decline in Iraq?

General PETRAEUS. It might be, again, that Admiral Fallon or others would be the ones—or the chairman—to comment on that. There has been a gradual reduction in deaths in Iraq since about June, I believe it was. That—unfortunately, in August we suffered a number of noncombat-related deaths, due to helicopter crashes, although the number of combat deaths was lower.

Senator FEINGOLD. General, just let me——

General PETRAEUS. We need to see——

Senator FEINGOLD [continuing]. Let me just follow——

General PETRAEUS [continuing]. What happens in ensuing months.

Senator FEINGOLD. I want the American people to know that, in every single month this year—January, February, March, April, May, June, July, and August—a significantly greater number of troops died than in the previous month in 2006—in every single month. And, according to my information, there's already 32 this month. So, to suggest that there was some decline in the number in June and July, versus the other months, does not address the fact that the number of troops deaths have greatly increased, and I'm not getting an answer that even begins to suggest when we can tell the American people that the number of troop deaths will decline.

General PETRAEUS. Senator, we are on the offensive. And when you go on the offensive, you have tough fighting. That was particularly true, again, during the period immediately after the start of the surge of offensives, in mid-June, and continued for a while. It appeared to have crested then, and was coming down. And, again,

we'll have to see. We had a tragic loss, yesterday, in fact, in some vehicle accidents that, again—you know, just very, very, very sad.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, General.

Senator Corker.

Senator CORKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, I want to thank you both for your service. I understand I'm new here, and I understand I'm at a semi-low point in the way we do things, and I regret that, while people certainly have the ability to criticize policies and judgments, that it's taken on the note of criticizing or questioning integrity. And I want to say, to both of you, I regret that, and I want to thank you for your service and the service of our men and women.

I also have noticed that we tend to look at governing in Iraq as being apparently less difficult than it is here. We want to hold them to standards, and yet, we have issues that we've talked about for generations here that still are not dealt with. We not only don't deal with the issues, sometimes we don't even talk about dealing with the issues.

And so, I'd like to move to that point, talking about the benchmarks, if you will, that the Iraqi Government has set out for itself, like we do many times and never achieve. OK? Unlike us, where we ride from nice homes to the Senate and workout in nice gyms, they're in a little bit different situation. And there's been a—I guess, some discussion that we need to leverage them into doing the right thing, that the way we do that is to pull troops out and cause them to take more of their own responsibility, and that somehow that's going to, if you will, leverage them into doing things that they're now not doing. And I'd like for both of you, if you will, to respond to that, because my sense is, that may be one of the recommendations, if you will, that comes forth from the Senate.

Ambassador CROCKER. Thank you. Senator.

That is a key question, because obviously we spend our time working out what—the full range of instruments of national power we have to leverage outcomes in Iraq that are favorable to our interests in Iraq's future. So, this is a legitimate question to ask.

I think we have to be very careful with that, frankly. The Iraqis are keenly aware that we may change our posture, we may go away entirely; we may go away entirely, sooner rather than later. They know all that. They also know they're going to be there forever. And I would be concerned that an approach that says we're going to start pulling troops, regardless of the objective conditions on the ground and what might happen in consequence of that, could actually push the Iraqis in the wrong direction, to make them less likely to compromise, rather than more likely. It would make them, I would fear, more focused on, you know, building the walls, stocking the ammunition, and getting ready for a big, nasty street fight without us around, than it would push them toward compromise and accommodation with the people who would be on the other side of that fight.

Iraqis are aware that our—that the patience of the American people is not limitless in this matter. And that has, I think, been a helpful prod with the Iraqi leadership, to push them forward, as we saw, this summer. But to directly tie troop levels to achieve-

ment of political reconciliation goals, I think, could make achievement of those goals less likely, rather than more.

Senator CORKER. General Petraeus, any comment?

General PETRAEUS. Well, I share the Ambassador's view with respect to that. There are some steps that we've taken. These are a bit more tactical, if you will. But we can literally withdraw support for certain elements of the Iraqi security forces, and there's a variety—we can say, "We'll stop working with you. We're going to stop helping your logistics." As the commander of the Multinational Security Transition Command in Iraq in the late summer of 2005, I withdrew all support to the Major Crimes Unit, because of an investigation that revealed that they had been engaged in abusing detainees. So, there are actions like that, that can be taken to encourage force—require action on their part. But when it gets up to the level of national legislation, I think that's an awfully tough question, frankly. I think that the Ambassador and his colleagues in the Embassy worked quite skillfully with the five leaders of Iraq who convened for the summit several weeks ago, after a number of weeks of preparation, and did achieve a modestly encouraging outcome from that. But the idea of, in a—again, threatening to withdraw may actually harden something that we're trying to soften. So, there's a very, very real issue of feel for what we think might happen in such a case.

Senator CORKER. On the issue of, I guess, the troop drawdowns that you've talked about, I assume they've been calibrated to the buildup and the ability of the Iraqi Army to do their—do the work themselves, and you've calibrated that as finely as you can.

General PETRAEUS. That is correct. In some cases—you know, again, there are fits and starts. It's uneven, as I said. And that, I think, is an honest assessment of the progress. There is progress. The progress is uneven.

In one case, we actually shifted some forces out of Anbar province way before I certainly thought we would, say, 6 or 7 months ago. We moved a battalion from Anbar Army battalion over into the adjacent province to the east of it. So, we'll be making tactical adjustments, if you will, but we have sat down and figured out the so-called battlefield geometry, projecting out to where we want to be by mid-July of next year, and then tried to figure out, again, how to best get there. And that is a big factor, frankly, in our starting by withdrawing the first brigade, without replacement, in mid-December, vice running the surge all the way, say, to every brigade staying for 15 months. In fact, in some cases we'll replace the surge brigades, geographically, or in its area of responsibility, because that's an important area, that's why we put it there, and actually thin out, or withdraw, without replacement, a brigade in another area in which things are going better. And a key component of that certainly is the Iraqi security forces, a key component of which, increasingly, is, again, local volunteers who are standing up, as I said, in a way that, particularly in Sunni Arab areas, was not the case in the past.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator, I hate to do this, but your time is up, and there—in order for us to get finished, we have another 84 minutes, so, gentlemen, it's overwhelmingly in your interest to make

your answers shorter, if you can, in order for people to be able to ask their questions.

We realize this is a difficult process, but I don't know any other way to do it.

Senator Boxer.

Senator BOXER. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, thank you for your service. I represent 37 million people, so you can imagine how many letters I get about the Iraq war. I get letter after letter asking me how long we'll be in Iraq. I tell them it depends on who the President is and how many votes there are in Congress to change course. And, as for my own views, I tell them that this war is the biggest foreign-policy mistake ever because it took our eye off defeating the terrorists, led by Osama bin Laden, who killed our people 6 years ago today. It is the greatest mistake because it strained our military, especially our National Guard. In California, gentlemen, we are short 50 percent of the equipment we need to respond to an earthquake and the Secretary of the Army said we'd be in trouble if there was a major earthquake. It is the greatest mistake, because we've lost so many of our own, and so many are wounded, who will need care for years and years. It breaks our hearts, all of our hearts. It is the biggest mistake, because we've lost the support of the world, when we had the whole world on our side after 9/11.

So, I want to go back to when I first met you, General Petraeus. We had a good meeting. I don't know if you remember it. I sure do. And I have a picture of you with Senator Reed, Senator Murray, Senator Durbin, and myself. At that point, you were in charge of training the Iraqi troops. You were so upbeat, General. You told me—I'll never forget it—you were sitting in an armored vehicle—you said, "You're about to see some terrific troops. We're going to have them ready to go." And you talked about training over 100,000 of them, at that time. And the fact is, I was very upbeat after that meeting.

I have all the documentation. I'd ask unanimous consent to put in all the documentation——

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection——

Senator BOXER [continuing]. I refer to.

The CHAIRMAN [continuing]. It will be put in the record.

[The information previously referred to follows:]

[Federal News Service, Mar. 22, 2005]

COMBINED PRESS INFORMATION CENTER BRIEFING BY MEMBERS OF U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION LED BY SENATE MINORITY LEADER HARRY REID IN BAGHDAD, IRAQ

STAFF. Thank you all for coming. We're very pleased this afternoon to have a congressional delegation, headed by Senator Harry Reid of Nevada, the Senate minority leader, with six of his colleagues. Senator Reid will introduce his colleagues. I believe each will give a brief statement and then answer your questions. We have about half an hour, so we'll try to use our time effectively.

Senator Reid.

SENATOR REID. Thank you all very much for being here today. We've had a long day so far. We've had the opportunity to visit the training of the Iraqis. This is something that we, of course, are very concerned about. And I think it was—to say the least, it was most impressive to watch the training take place. We had a good briefing by General Casey. We've had the opportunity to visit with the Iraqi leaders themselves.

And I think that I recognize that we have a situation where we have to be concerned, first of all, about the security of this country. We all know that this country will never be secure with the United States being here only. The only way it will be secure is the Iraqis having a security force that they can handle their own problems here. That's under way. We, of course, recognize that until that's taken place—until that takes place, there's nothing that can be done to stabilize the economy; that reconstruction won't take place until the security is in place, there's no question about that, and the political aspect of this as we move down the road with the successful elections that took place on January 30.

Why are we here? Well, the week we return back, the Senate will take up the $80 billion supplemental appropriation bill, the vast majority of which will come to Iraq in one form—fashion or another. So we have responsibilities. And it's very difficult to be briefed in your offices, at committee hearings in Washington. It's not the same as traveling and seeing what's going on in the country itself. This is the first trip for me to Iraq. Some of my colleagues here have been here on previous occasions. But to me, this has been a very, very good day. I've learned a lot. I have a better feeling about what's going on here, not only from the perspective of the Americans who are here with the military, the diplomatic corps, who we've had extensive briefings from today, are tremendously important here, as they are every place in the world; and then, of course, to get the perspective we have from the Iraqis themselves.

So I feel good about this.

This is a very large Senate delegation. Rarely do you see seven senators traveling together. We're fortunate in being able to do that.

We have a bipartisan group. We have Democrats. We have Republicans. We have senators from virtually every part of the country.

And what we're going to do now, as has already been indicated, is each of my colleagues will make a brief statement, and then we'll take questions. We'll first hear from the assistant minority leader of the United States Senate, Richard Durbin, from the State of Illinois.

SENATOR RICHARD DURBIN (D–IL). Thank you very much, Senator Reid.

This is my first visit to Iraq, and it's been a typical visit where we come for a day. And I wish that we could stay longer and see more.

But first and foremost, I want to say thank you to the men and women of America who are literally risking their lives every day for the future of Iraq, our men and women in uniform, as well as those who work in our government, in many different capacities, who believe so much in the future of Iraq and its freedom that they have come here, with great personal sacrifice.

And I also want to issue my heartiest congratulations to the people of Iraq. What they showed on election day here in Iraq is what we had hoped and dreamed about: That they would care enough about controlling their own future and their own destiny that they would run the risk of voting. And they did, in dramatic numbers.

So as Senator Reid said, we come today knowing that in just a few days we will be voting to continue this effort in Iraq.

One of the people who met with us today, I thought, used a very important way to describe the situation in Iraq. He called Iraq an "infant democracy." And he said, "You can't leave this infant alone." We understand that.

But we know that the day is going to come, and soon, when Iraq will be able to stand on its own and move forward as a democracy. And that is a day that we're going to work for. Seeing the training of the troops and the police force is just moving that day even closer.

I believe what we have seen here in meeting with the different groups and factions in Iraq is a common purpose. And I hope that we can stand with the Iraqi people and realize the success of that purpose very soon.

SENATOR REID. Senator Bennett of Utah.

SENATOR ROBERT BENNETT (R–UT). Thank you very much, Senator Reid. We appreciate your leadership on this codel, which has been fascinating.

When I've been to Iraq before or last—the beginning of last summer and arrived in country just about a day or two after General Petraeus did, one of our first briefings was with General Petraeus. And he outlined in very optimistic fashion all of the things he hoped we could do. And it's particularly gratifying to come back and have him be our first briefer and outline all of the things that they have done.

And we see that the progress has gone from those initial plans, that were nothing more than plans and hopes, to the demonstration that Senator Reid has referred to today that showed us how expert the Iraqi security forces are in the process of becoming.

And seeing it in that fashion, the outline last summer and then the activity today, gives me the hope that the continued projections of progress that we are receiving

optimistically from both the diplomatic corps and the military people will, in fact, come to pass. If we had not had that record of accomplishment, I think we'd all be a little more skeptical. But I find a quiet optimism, I guess is the right way to put it, instead of cautious optimism.

The Americans are generally optimistic about the future. They recognize, everyone who's briefed us, whether it's been an American or an Iraqi, how difficult the road ahead still is. I don't think there are any illusions that we have passed the tipping point and it's all easy from here on. But I think the combination of the elections and the increased ability of the Iraqi security forces to perform has given everyone a kind of quiet optimism that we are, in fact, however long and difficult the road ahead may still be, going to see the establishment of a successful country here. And that, of course, is very gratifying to everybody.

We still have a lot to do. We still have a lot to worry about. It is not a done deal yet. But the signs are much more optimistic now than they were then, and I'm just very glad that I had the opportunity to have this second visit here and see this change that's taken place for the better.

SENATOR REID. Senator Barbara Boxer of California represents more people—10 million more people than live in the country of Iraq.

SENATOR BARBARA BOXER (D–CA). Yes, that's true.

Senator Reid, I want to thank you again for putting this together. It has been an incredible opportunity for all of us to meet with our troops, both in Kuwait and here in country, and to thank them and to let them know that we understand the hardships they're facing. Also a chance to meet with some of the emerging Iraqi leadership, very important.

So I have two points to make. One, at the end of the day, success in Iraq is totally up to the Iraqis. We can help, and we have, and of course we will, and hopefully, the world will, as well. But success means, I believe, a government that is inclusive of all the elements in the society. And I believe it is fair to say that all of us gave that message today to the various leaders that we met here—Shia, Sunni, and Kurd.

And I guess success also greatly depends upon the training of these Iraqi security forces, because there is no way you can have a country—it doesn't matter whether it's the United States or Canada or anywhere in Europe or here—if you can't ensure the safety of the people. And we did see some very impressive training today. We did get a very upbeat report from our military on the numbers being trained. We got a slightly different view from Dr. Ja'afari as far as, you know, how ready they are to take things over.

But all in all, I think this has been an extraordinary time. I think to all of you who are here in the press, I just want to say I think you're courageous, and I hope you will report the truth as you see it because the truth is always the way to get to the best result.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR REID. Senator Patty Murray, the State of Washington.

SENATOR PATTY MURRAY (D–WA). Thank you, Senator Reid.

It is truly an amazing experience to be here on the ground in Iraq, to be able to visit with the leaders from Shia, Sunni, and Kurdish governments who are working so hard to make progress here in Iraq.

Last night we had the opportunity to visit our troops in Kuwait, and I had dinner with some of our brigades that are headed home shortly, and had an opportunity to listen to them, and have lunch today with some of our troops that are here in Baghdad from the State of Washington. I'm very proud to say that when the University of Washington Huskies play this weekend, there will be a number of troops here in Baghdad who will be watching the game with Husky shirts that the team sent out here for them. So we will be having a tremendous show of support here from Baghdad for our team back at home.

We have had the opportunity to see Iraqi soldiers being trained, which is extremely important to move forward in terms of security. We were able to see some on the ground, in terms of moving towards reconstruction, that is so important for economic security. We had an opportunity to talk to political leaders as the constitution is being put together—an important roadmap ahead for this country. And I think we all believe that a lot of progress has been made, but certainly we can see that there are many, many challenges ahead.

We will be going back next week—or 2 weeks from now, to the Senate to consider the supplemental appropriations bill. And it is extremely important that we were here on the ground to be able to make an assessment for ourselves how the funds are being spent and the needs for them so that we can move forward and continue to make progress here in Iraq.

SENATOR REID. We're fortunate to have with us on this trip one of the most experienced people in the United States Senate. Senator Lamar Alexander has been a Governor of the State of Tennessee, he's been a Cabinet officer, been Secretary of Education. He's run for President of the United States, and now a United States Senator.

Senator Alexander.

SENATOR LAMAR ALEXANDER (R–TN). Thank you. I want to thank Senator Reid for the way he's conducted this trip. It used to be said that the United States Senate was always bipartisan when it came to foreign relations, and I think that's been the approach this week, and I give him credit for that.

I've been impressed with the courage of the Americans I've seen in Iraq, and of the Iraqis themselves and this incredible mix of danger and hope that we see here. It's clear to me that this is—it's too early to leave; it's too early to declare success; and it's a good time to remind ourselves that once we make a commitment—once the United States does—that we must have the stomach to see it all the way through to the end.

There's no such thing as an instant army—we've seen that. There's no such thing as an instant democracy. And I've been impressed with what good students of the United States democracy many of the Iraqi leaders are. They know that we Americans have had a democracy that's a work in progress. I was thinking, it took 12 years from the date of our Declaration of Independence to our Constitution, and we had to lock the press out in order to write the Constitution. And the Iraqis are doing it within a matter of a couple of years, or 2½ years, in an era of 24/7 television and news coverage. So I'm impressed with the success we've seen so far, and I'm glad to have had this opportunity.

SENATOR REID. Senator Ken Salazar, the State of Colorado.

SENATOR KEN SALAZAR (D–CO). Thank you, Senator Reid.

I'm hopeful about Iraq and its future. I also am realistic that there are some huge challenges that the Iraqi people and the world and the United States face in Iraq in the future. I'm very proud of our soldiers and Marines who are here on the ground, both here in Iraq and in Kuwait and around the world.

I think the key challenges that face Iraq in the future have to do with security, political change and reform, and economics, and in surmounting those issues and challenges, I think there's still a long and difficult road ahead.

I think the true signs of a mature democracy—which we may not see here for some time to come—are based on many principles, but two principles that are very important to me are, one, an inclusive society, and that's a society that's inclusive of women and a society that is inclusive of minorities, and that means all the components of the population of Iraq; and second, a society that stands up for the respect of law. And you can only have a respect of law when you have the kind of security that allows a society to function. And while there has been progress made in security here in Iraq, it's equally obvious that there's still a long ways to go before we can have the kind of security that we can then say we have a free Iraq.

Thank you.

SENATOR REID. We'll be happy to answer questions now.

Q. (Through interpreter.) During your visit, I think that you have met with members of the Iraqi government.

And one of the congresswomen talked about meeting al-Ja'afari. (Pause.) During your visit you met the Iraqi leaders. You met with the Iraqi leaders in the phase of forming the new Iraqi government. How do you find the process of forming the new Iraqi government? And did you give advice to the Iraqi politicians about the formation of the new Iraqi government?

SENATOR REID. We listened to—as has been indicated by Senator Boxer, we've met with the Shia, the Sunnis, the Kurds. And we were not in the business of giving them advice. We did listen to them. I think we all got the same impression in listening to every one of them. That is that they believe, all political constituencies we met with, they believe that there can be a government formed on the 26th of this month. They're not certain, but they all believe that it can be; if not, sometime thereafter. They believe that once a government's formed, that there will be increased stability in this country, that the people of Iraq are looking for a government of their own. Without question, everyone was very impressed with the elections that took place January 30th.

But I don't think we're here—we're not here giving advice. We're here listening and taking back to America what we think is appropriate for us to help the Iraqi people gain their ultimate freedom, which is a government of their own.

Yes?

Q. (Through interpreter.) Abbas Salahey (ph) from Sawa. I take this opportunity to ask you a number of questions, gentlemen. My first question, how do you assess

the situation in Iraq during this visit? And second, what is the goal of your mission in this phase in the history of Iraq? And have you negotiated——

SENATOR REID. Let me get those two of them. That's about the best I can handle at a time.

INTERPRETER. All right.

SENATOR REID. First of all, the condition of Iraq. For the people who have been on the ground here for a number of months, they all agree that things have stabilized, things are better. The number of insurgent attacks are down.

There is no one that said that, as Senator Bennett said, that we're over the hump. We still have a long ways to go. I think we all agree that Iraq has a long ways to go.

Let's see. That was one question. What was your other question?

SENATOR MURRAY. Our mission.

SENATOR REID. Oh, our mission. Our mission here is as I've indicated.

SENATOR. Yeah.

SENATOR REID. Our mission here—thanks, Patty—our mission here is to see with our own eyes, to feel the people of Iraq, so that when we return to America, we will have a better understanding of what the money that we're appropriating, which is—the request this time from the administration is $80 billion—where this money's going.

Yes?

Q. Colin McMahon from the Chicago Tribune. Thank you. Two questions, one about your meeting today with General Casey. Did General Casey tell you anything that he needs, whether it's more personnel or more equipment or different equipment or anything like that, that he's not getting?

And secondly, it's about politics. With Vice President Ja'afari today, did he give you an indication of how quickly the government would be formed? And did he give you any indication of what might be the holdup? Thank you.

SENATOR REID. I'll answer the last question. Then Senator Durbin, from your State, can—your newspaper's State can answer the second—the first part of the question.

He indicated, as everyone has said here today, the 26th is the date; that they feel confident that that can be the date. They are—they wouldn't guarantee that date, and he didn't either. But he felt the 26th was the date.

Dick, would you answer the other questions about General Casey?

SENATOR DURBIN. Let me say about—General Casey did not make any specific requests that I recall in terms of equipment or additional personnel. But I will tell you that in our visit to Kuwait last night there were a lot of discussions, particularly about armor on humvees and trucks. And we went into that issue at great length.

I was very anxious to ask that question because, like most of my colleagues here, I've visited Walter Reed Hospital. I've seen our soldiers who have been in these humvees and who have lost an arm or a leg. And I felt duty-boound to come here and to make that point to each of the leaders—military leaders that we had to respond to this quickly.

We were shown a timetable about armoring up the vehicles to a higher level of protection. We have been given a target of the end of the summer for this additional armament for humvees and for trucks. I wish it were sooner. But I think there is a sense of urgency by our military leaders to move on this as quickly as possible.

I don't know if there were—there was another request, incidentally, that Senator Boxer just reminded me—our soldiers need more M–4 rifles.

They're currently using M–16s. And unfortunately, in the truck, the cabs of the truck, it's a much longer gun than is practical to use, sticking out the window. So we asked about more M–4s, we asked about the new Kevlar helmets. They are coming. If there's any way for us to accelerate the production of this equipment, or tourniquets for each of our soldiers, which is another issue near and dear to me, I'm going to do everything I can on a bipartisan basis—I don't think there's anything partisan about this at all—to make sure that equipment's forthcoming.

SENATOR REID. And Dick, I would just add to that, the end of the summer sounds pretty quick to us the way a lot of things move in Washington. But for the troops there on the ground, that's an eternity. And we're going to do everything we can to try to squeeze that time a little bit.

Any other questions? Yes.

Q. Sam Dagher with AFP News Agency. A question for Senator Boxer. You mentioned that you—in your meeting with the front-runner for the premiership, Ibrahim Ja'afari, he talked about the readiness of Iraqi forces, and you said his views differed from the views given by the commanders. Are you able to elaborate on that?

And the second part of my question is, what was your impression of him as—as the next leader? Thank you.

SENATOR BOXER. Okay. My—I'll take your second question first.

He seemed to us—you know, we—we spent about an hour with him. It's hard to know someone in one hour, but he seemed to be very much in favor of being inclusive, he seemed to be very much in favor of bringing women into equal power in this country—equal rights, I should say. He's very grateful to the Americans, and that would lead me to the final point. I asked him a question as to how long he felt America should stay. He kind of changed the question to the multinational forces, but clearly we have probably 95 percent of the multinational forces, so to me it's the same question. He basically said that he—he says it takes a long time to build an army, essentially. That's a loose translation. And I got the sense that he—he's not as upbeat about how it's going as our people, who seem to be very excited about the quality of the Iraqi police force and army now that the training has been accelerated.

So that was my own feeling. I don't speak for everybody up here. But that was my sense, was that he was certainly in no rush to hand over security to his police force and army. That was my impression.

SENATOR REID. Let me just say this, too. Those were your words that he would be the next leader. We're not here being involved in who's going to be the next leader. That will be up to the Iraqi people. We're not——

Q. Excuse me, sir, I said prospective front-runner. I qualified it.

SENATOR REID. Okay, one more question.

Yes?

Q. (Through interpreter.) You came here to see how the $18 billion are spent here in Iraq. The Iraqi citizens didn't feel the benefit of these $18 billion. I think that you should spend this on electricity; it would have been better for the Iraqis to spend this fund on electricity.

SENATOR REID. We—the money that we're talking about spending is $80 billion. There's been set aside previously $18 billion for reconstruction, and not a lot of that has been spent. And I don't think it's only electricity, the infrastructure is—not only was it run down during the days of Saddam but, of course, has been damaged significantly during the conflict here. And there are all kinds of complaints about water and sewer and, of course, electricity. And reconstruction cannot go forward as we want it to go forward until there's a security situation that can allow the work to go forward. We've done some reconstruction that's been destroyed.

Everyone understands in the American government that reconstruction is a part of our success here, and we're going to do the very best we can to make sure that the money is well spent.

The $80 billion, we're going to take a look at that closely, as we've indicated, on a bipartisan basis. The trip here will help a great deal to help us direct where some of that money should be spent. And so we are comfortable with the fact that we've been here, it will make us better members of the legislature.

Again, thank you all very much for being here.

Q. One last question? Senator, can I ask one last question?

SENATOR BOXER. With The Hill.

SENATOR REID. Well, we already had one last one. But because you are up on Capitol Hill, we'll give you one last question.

Q. Thank you. I deserve one question since I gave up a Colorado ski vacation.

But I want to ask Senator Salazar, this is the first time you've been here. And you've read and seen a lot about Iraq. Is there anything you saw or heard here that surprised you or was different than what you——

SENATOR BOXER. They want you to speak into the mike.

Q. Sorry.

You had been here once—you have not been here before; it's your first trip. And you've read and seen a a lot about Iraq in the papers and TV. Is there anything in your trip here that you heard or saw that surprised you, that you didn't expect, either good or bad?

SENATOR SALAZAR. I think the enormity of it—of the challenge that still lies ahead was reinforced by what we've seen through the air and what we've seen on the ground. The fact is that there has been a lot of progress made, and I think we're optimistic that the last six weeks have seen a decline in the level of violence here in Iraq.

But the security issues are huge, the economic issues and the poverty that still is very much a part of Iraq. The political process that is currently under way, I think, should be a cause for all of us to make sure that we're very thoughtful as we move forward.

Someone—I think it was Senator Boxer—asked a question of one of the people that we met with today about what was the worst-case scenario for Iraq. And the worst-case scenario would be a civil war. None of us here want that to happen. There has been too much life and blood and resources invested into where we are today.

And so I think that for me, what this trip has done is to simply reinforce the enormity of the challenge that we face here in Iraq in helping the Iraqi people themselves establish their self-determination and their own democracy.

SENATOR REID. I would recommend you go to Lake Tahoe for that ski vacation. (Soft laughter.)

STAFF. Thank you, everybody. Thank you, Senators.

SENATOR BOXER. Right. On the California side. (Laughter.)

SENATOR BENNETT. Traveling through Utah.

SENATOR MURRAY (?). Traveling through Utah to the California side. (Laughter.)

Senator BOXER. And so, the point was, the Iraqis were going to take this over, and you were as optimistic as anyone I've ever seen on the point.

Now, that's what the Brits have done—they've let the Iraqi's take over—and, that's what Senator Kerry talked about. They said they were redeploying our of Basrah, because they said, and I quote, "It makes sense to hand over to Iraqi forces." They went outside, and they redeployed to the perimeter—to the airport.

In my visit to London, 2 weeks ago, the foreign policy people I met with told me that they had to get out because they were viewed as occupiers, not liberators, and they were targets. They said 90 percent of the violence, they felt, was occuring because they were there.

Now, let's look at some of our casualties since this surge, which has been referred to by several of my colleagues. I have them on a chart. To me, this speaks volumes about the surge. The deadliest summer for U.S. forces in Iraq has been since the surge began.

Now, I think the notion of being seen as occupiers is key. And this is what you said about being seen as occupiers, if we could hold that quote up by General Petraeus. I'm rushing through this because of time limits. I'm sorry.

You said, in 2003, "We want to be seen as an army of liberation, not an army of occupation. There's a half-life on our role here. You wear out your welcome at some point. It doesn't matter how helpful you are, we aren't here to stay."

Now, let's see what the seven sergeants and staff sergeants said in an article referred to by Senator Hagel, "We need to recognize, our presence may have released Iraqis from the grip of a tyrant, but it's also robbed them of their self-respect, their dignity, and they're calling us what we are, an army of occupation. Enforce our withdrawal. Until that happens, it would be prudent for us to increasingly let Iraqis take center stage in all matters, to come up with a nuanced policy in which we assist them from the margins, but let them resolve their own differences."

I don't consider the surge a nuanced policy. It's killing our soldiers at a great rate.

I think we need to look at reality. Senator Biden talked to you about what the Comptroller General said, and you're going to argue about it? I think the Comptroller General ought to be listened to. He says you're cherry picking your numbers, in terms of the overall violence.

Let's look at what General Casey has said. And I'd ask—well, we have consent to put that in the record. He says that, in essence, the surge has only a temporary tactical effect.

Let's look at the poll both of you tried to discredit yesterday. An ABC–BBC–NHK poll found that 42 percent of Iraqis says their children will have a worse life; 25 percent say it will be no better—that's 67 percent saying their kids' lives will not be better than their own—70 percent says the surge is making matters worse. Is that what our troops are dying for?

I ask you to take off your rosy glasses. You had them on in 2005. I believed you. I thought for sure we were going to see the Iraqis take over their own defense.

Now, the President is the Commander in Chief. If anyone disagrees with that, let me know. The Commander in Chief is the President. He makes the policy. You carry it out. And if you don't want to carry it out, I think you just need to leave your post.

Now, this is the President who said, "Mission accomplished," and thousands of our own died. Then he said, "Bring it on," and more and more died. And, just the other day, he was quoted in the Australian press as saying, "We're kicking A-S-S in Iraq." And since the President made that comment, we have lost 28 soldiers in 6 days.

Who wants to keep this course? Not the Iraqis. Not the American people. Not the majority of the Senate and the House. Seventy percent of the Iraqis say the surge is making matters worse. Ninety percent of the Sunnis want us gone. Eighty percent of the Shia want us out. So, we are sending our troops where they're not wanted, with no end in sight, in the middle of a civil war, in the middle of the mother of all mistakes.

So, please, General, I ask you, please don't do what you did in 2004, when you painted a rosy scenario in an op-ed piece. Turned out to be wrong. Like you did in 2005, when you told us—and we believed you—that the Iraqis were just about there, that they were going to take over their own defense. And please consider that others could be right—the Brits, General Casey, Comptroller General, Lee Hamilton, and Tom Keane, who just wrote in an op-ed piece that our presence in Iraq is recruiting terrorists for al-Qaeda. Listen to the Iraqi people, the American people, and the majority of the Congress.

My question is—and I know I've run out of time, so I will have to take it in writing—but it's a very important one. Don Rumsfeld said that this war would last "no more than 6 months." How long will it take, now that we've spent $20 billion and we've trained 350,000 Iraqis in counterinsurgency? When, General Petraeus, can they take over their own defense? Call me old-fashioned—you have a country, you defend it.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

If you could respond to that in writing, I'd appreciate it.

[The written information provided by GEN Petraeus follows:]

Iraqi Security Forces are already providing for their own defense in a number of areas and are slowly, but steadily, assuming responsibility for more. There are, for example, no coalition forces in Muthana province and only a single Special Forces team in Najaf province. In the Kurdish provinces, the only coalition forces are Liaison Teams (LNOs). Successfully transferring further security responsibility to the

Government of Iraq and the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) depends on several key conditions. These include achieving sustainable security environment commensurate with ISF capabilities to maintain it, eliminating sectarian behavior within the security organizations, continuing ISF expansion, developing ISF combat enablers, especially logistics and administration, and growing a sufficient number of ISF leaders. Additionally, asuccessful transfer of responsibility will depend on the further institutional development of the Ministries of Interior and Defense.

Achievement of these conditions takes significant effort from all involved, including MNF–I, the U.S. Embassy, and, most importantly, the Government of Iraq. The Government of Iraq, the Ministries of Defense and Interior, and senior leaders within the Iraqi Security Forces are taking their commitment to improving their forces and their institutions seriously. Though many challenges still exist, we are seeing progress in several areas, most notably the steady increase in both the number and quality of Iraqi military and police units. They are in the fight throughout the country, showing increasing resiliency, often in the face of heavy combat operations and with minimal coalition assistance. As we look to the future—growing a larger force as well as sustaining the current one—we are also assisting Iraq in developing their institutional base. The recent establishment of a bomb disposal school at Besmaya is but one microexample of how Iraq is increasing its ability to expand and replenish critical security functions now largely performed by coalition forces. Additionally, the coalition continues its concerted effort to assist the Iraqi Government in making maximum use of the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program, as it constitutes the majority of ISF capital expenditure. In 2007, Iraq's Ministry of Defense has so far dedicated $1.1B in FMS, and the Ministry of Interior plans to invest $500M. We project that in 2008 both ministries will maintain or expand their use of FMS.

Depending on the conditions on the ground and capabilities of the Iraqi forces in a partitular area, coalition forces either lead, partner, or provide overwatch for the ISF. Where conditions reqire, coalition forces remain in the lead and bear significant support responsibilities for the ISF. In less demanding environments, coalition forces partner with the ISF, conducting joint operations that not only help improve the Iraqi forces but also help demonstrate to the Iraqi citizens the increasing capabilities of the ISF. In overwatch status, the ISF take the lead in conducting operations and providing for Iraq's defense and coalition forces provide enablers and have quick reaction forces available to respond if needed provide backup.

Based on the security improvements we have made and additional improvements we expect to make as well as on the continuing development of the Iraqi Security Forces we have already recommended a drawdown of five surge brigades, two Marine battalions, and a Marine Expeditionary Unit. In fact, the Marine Expeditionary Unit has already left Iraq. We believe that we will be able to execute this reduction in forces without jeopardizing the security gains that we have fought so hard to achieve. Further reductions and potential changes to our mission will take place, but in my professional military judgment, it is premature to make those recommendations at this time. By mid-March of next year, we believe we will have an adequate appreciation for the pace of further troop reductions and mission adjustments beyond the summer of 2008. By then, we will know more about the enemy situation, the capabilities of the Iraqi forces and the concerned local citizens, and further improvements to the security situation, and will then be prepared to make recommendations for additional drawdown and potential change in mission.

As we move forward, we must remain mindful of the fact that achieving sustainable stability and successfully transferring security responsibility to the Government of Iraq and Iraqi Security Forces will not be quick or easy. Doing so will take continued time, commitment, and resources on the part of our country. While our Nation is eager to transition security responsibilities to the Iraqi Security Forces and they are eager to assume greater responsibilities and to have coalition forces assume an overwatch position, we must ensure the gradual transition is based on conditions on the ground and the capabilities of the Iraqi forces. Transitioning responsibility prematurely—and before the Iraqi forces are fully ready to handle it—would most likely result in a rush to failure, creating the conditions in which a deterioration of the security environment would again become far more likely.

Our plans call for sustainable security to be established nationwide by the summer of 2009. By then, we also expect Iraqi forces to be in the lead in providing for Iraq's defense throughout the country, but that does not end the commitment of American forces, which I would expect to continue well into the next admnistration, though the number of personnel and resources will be far smaller than at present time. I expect long-term force levels will be determined by a long-term strategic relationship that will be negotiated between the Government of Iraq and our own government.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Sununu.

Senator SUNUNU. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you both for being here. For people that may be just seeing you on television or in the public for the first time, I think it's worth mentioning that you've been taking on incredibly difficult jobs, not just for a few months, or even a few years, but for a few decades, I think, in both cases. And you really are to be saluted for that.

I will take my question and answer time to ask questions, if it's all right with the committee and the witnesses.

I want to begin with you, Ambassador Crocker. There's been a lot of discussion about areas of improvement, Anbar, Diyala, locally driven. And I think that's been fairly well recognized. But there's a simple concern—there are probably many concerns—but a simple concern is: What happens when we leave? How do we ensure that local progress on politics, local progress on reconstruction, local progress on recruiting police officers, is sustained? And I'd like you to describe, in your mind, what you think the specific institutions, resources, or additional steps are that will be required if that progress, at the local level, is going to be sustained once these withdrawals are completed.

Ambassador CROCKER. There are several elements to that excellent question. First, as I've said before, I think that ensuring that local developments relate to the center in ways that both the localities—the provinces—and the center agree are the most beneficial to larger interests. I think that is essential. And that is why we've placed such emphasis, in Anbar, for example, on ensuring that police are recruited from the locality, but paid for by the central government.

Iraq may, as time goes on and conditions stabilize, evolve into an entity that is different than it is now. But, right now, the center is important to the provinces, because it controls the finance, for example, and it affects development, to a large extent, because projects in provinces, in many cases, are carried out by offices of Baghdad ministries. So, that's one part of it—ensuring that there is an appropriate connection between provincial initiatives and the central government.

In terms of what we can do, as you know, in terms of U.S. assistance efforts, we have moved from major infrastructure projects into a focus on capacity-building. And we've got additional people coming out, for example, to assist that effort at the federal level, advisors to ministries to help them deliver services more efficiently, including services to the provinces. We have also, through the expansion of our Provincial Reconstruction Teams, carried that effort, in very close coordination with the military. And, as you know, most of the—all of the additional reconstruction teams are embedded with military units. We've carried that down to the provinces. We've increased staffing. And, thanks to Congress, we now have what are called Quick Response Funds available to supplement the military's CERF funds. And Brigade Combat Team leaders and Provincial Reconstruction Team leaders coordinate to ensure that they're complementing each other, not competing, on efforts to develop provincial capacities, because I think that that is going to be critically important.

Provincial governance is new in Iraq. It did not exist at all in any meaningful way under Saddam, and it really didn't exist even prior to that. So, their learning curve has got to be a very steep one. So, our effort to help that, I think, is also key.

Senator SUNUNU. With regard to reconstruction, in your testimony you mentioned $10 billion in oil resources. You've also mentioned the very important critical assistance, U.S. taxpayer funds, for the reconstruction—for the provincial reconstruction teams and for reconstruction efforts. Capacity-building is a problem. What other obstacles are there, however, to spending that $10 billion effectively? What confidence level do you have in the accountability? What confidence level do you have in the current quality of the investments that are being made? Are you confident that this money is going to be used effectively, not just for the long term, but in the next 6 to 9 months?

Ambassador CROCKER. We're talking about Iraq's own investments here, the $10 billion in their capital development budget?

Senator SUNUNU. Yes.

Ambassador CROCKER. Yeah. There are a number of mechanisms and measures that the Iraqis have in place to monitor waste, fraud, and mismanagement—inspectors general, the Commission for Public Integrity, the Board of Central Audit——

Senator SUNUNU. Do those really work? Are they working now?

Ambassador CROCKER. To a degree. I mean, it's like a lot of other things in Iraq, quite frankly, Senator, works in progress.

Perhaps the most effective check on this is, I think, the healthy watchfulness between center and provinces. The provinces want to be darn sure that they're getting everything that is supposed to be coming to them. And the center, out of whose treasury it comes, has a pronounced interest in seeing that the money is used, and not pocketed. And, ultimately, of course, in even the very imperfect open society that Iraq is at this point, people are watching, too. Provincial councils are watching how this is spent.

Senator SUNUNU. Thank you.

General Petraeus, you've described withdrawals—or reduction of troop levels, to begin this month; reduction of 30,000 to be completed by July. You've also spoken about a mid-March assessment, at which point you'll decide whether to recommend withdrawals beyond that 30,000-troop reduction that's in your testimony. What factors—what specific factors are you going to look at in assessing whether or not there are further troop reductions recommended in that mid-March assessment? And how might those factors be different than the factors you look at in making these recommendations for force reductions?

General PETRAEUS. I think, Senator, that the operational and strategic considerations that I laid out in my testimony actually will all still obtain as we work out the pace of the further reductions beyond the situation that we've recommended for mid-July right now. Highlighted among those, needless to say, would be the local security and political situations. And, again, the political piece of that is quite important, because, as we saw in Anbar province, that really was—what changed so dramatically there was, again, sort of a political change, really, of tribes and their leaders choos-

ing to oppose al-Qaeda, as opposed to being in league with, or at least tacitly accepting their presence.

So, again, that's what we will be looking at very, very closely. Similar considerations. Again, it will be informed by the strain on our ground forces. That was a factor in this particular set of recommendations, and we'll continue to do that again next time, as well.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you——

Senator SUNUNU. Thank you, General. Thank you——

The CHAIRMAN [continuing]. Very much, Senator.

Senator SUNUNU [continuing]. Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Nelson.

Senator BILL NELSON. Gentlemen, thank you for your public service.

Mr. Ambassador, can Iraq be stabilized without political reconciliation between Sunnis and Shiites?

Ambassador CROCKER. No, sir.

Senator BILL NELSON. What is the chance of that political reconciliation in the course of the remainder of this administration, over the next 16 months?

Ambassador CROCKER. Senator, I could not put a timeline on it, or a target date. I can point to some of the—as we've discussed earlier—some of the processes that are underway, some of the hopeful signs. Clearly, there is a great deal more to do, both at the national level and down in the streets, in mixed areas. We've talked a bit about the situation in Baghdad. How long that is going to take, and, frankly, even ultimately, whether it will succeed, I can't predict. I think there is enough in the way of positive signs here to justify the course we're on, but, again, I can't give you any timelines, dates, or guarantees.

Senator BILL NELSON. Is the success in Anbar province a success because the question of political reconciliation is not there, since it is all Sunni?

Ambassador CROCKER. Yes and no. Where the reconciliation aspect comes in is through the efforts by the central government to connect to the province and the people in the province, the hiring of the policemen, for example, the furnishing of additional financial resources, as well as steps in Abu Ghraib, close to Baghdad—some Baghdad neighborhoods. So, it's—I would say what happened in Anbar-proper, that would be a precursor to reconciliation. The connections we're seeing between the central government and the province, the beginnings of reconciliation, but clearly there's a lot more to do. Diyala—the province of Diyala, to the northeast of Baghdad, may be a more accurate measure as to how this proceeds, because of the fact that Diyala is a very mixed province—Sunni, Shia, and Kurds—and it has also suffered from extremists excesses, both al-Qaeda and extremist Shia militias. So, that process of reconciliation would be directly linked, I think, to the overall Sunni-Shia and, indeed, Sunni-Shia-Kurd process.

Senator BILL NELSON. As a diplomat, given the fact that the General has testified here that at the end of next summer we would likely be in the range of about 130,000 American troops—with only about 4 months left in the Bush administration—handing

that situation off, with 130,000 troops, to the next President—what is your analysis of the diplomatic conditions and the chances of success under those conditions?

Ambassador CROCKER. Well, quite frankly, Senator, that's just not where my focus is. It's looking at the conditions inside Iraq. General Petraeus referred to a battlefield geometry. There's also, if you will, a political-military trigonometry that comes into play, as well, in making the determinations as to, again, ability and orientation of Iraqi forces, conditions in areas that obviously are going to affect redeployment decisions. But that's where the focus is, not on the U.S. political calendar—for me.

Senator BILL NELSON. All right. Well, let me ask you about something that you're engaged in right now. You have been having discussions with the Iranian Ambassador. Do you see any signs of change? Do you have any optimism, with regard to your conclusions from your discussions with Iran, that would give us any indication that Iran does not want to take full advantage of the conditions in Iraq, to the detriment of the interests of the United States?

Ambassador CROCKER. The discussions we've had so far have not resulted in any visible improvement of the security situation in Iraq, as it is attributable to Iran, whether it's training, funding, or providing munitions to radical Shia militias, as I've noted. Iran is a complicated place, and they make complicated calculations. And I don't pretend to be able to read their minds. I don't—therefore, I am not prepared to say that this channel is not worth pursuing. It has not produced results, as of yet. Maybe that will change in the future.

Senator BILL NELSON. Let me ask you this final question, then.

And, Mr. Chairman, my time's about up, isn't it?

The CHAIRMAN. You have another minute.

Senator BILL NELSON. Sixty-seconds' worth. Are you concerned, as you talk to Iran and as you observe that process, that Iran is going to be behind a Hezbollah-type destabilization in Iraq in order to exact a price upon the United States interests?

Ambassador CROCKER. Sir, they already are, in my judgment, involved in that sort of process.

Senator BILL NELSON. And are they utilizing that Sunni-Shia split?

Ambassador CROCKER. They are seeking to expand their influence in Iraq using extremist militias. And those militias have been a major factor in the sectarian violence, yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Senator.

Gentlemen, you've been testifying for a long time. Why don't we, in a moment, take a 5-minute break.

I'd like to recognize, though, a former staff member here, Rich Houghton. And I mention him as illustrative of the civilians that are over there. For 29 months, he's been in Iraq. He was on this committee for years, as Senator Thomas's staffer. And I want to point out that it's been 8 months since he's been home, and, as both our colleagues know, he ushered us around, and he puts his life on the line, too. He's out there in those vehicles, he's flying all around. And he's not the only one, but I don't know many that have been there much more than 29 months.

Why don't you stand up. I want the committee to remember who you were. There you go.

And, by the way, he——

[Applause.]

The CHAIRMAN. By the way, General, a special-forces guys that take us around, they don't think he can handle himself. I don't know what the story is. But, at any rate. [Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. So, let's take a 5-minute break.

[Recess.]

The CHAIRMAN. The hearing will come to order.

Senator Murkowski.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador, General, I, too, want to echo my appreciation, my admiration for your work, for your service, and to echo the support of all Americans for those men and women that are serving us in such an incredible way in so many different places.

You know, we had asked you to come and report to Congress this week. I think your testimony has been one of the most anticipated testimonies, certainly that I can recall, here in the Congress. Many of us have withheld either comments or projecting on what may happen, until we heard directly from you. So, we appreciate this report today.

We also acknowledge that, preceding your testimony, we have received numerous reports, all giving various assessments. So, this much-anticipated testimony is, in many ways, a little bit preempted by some of what we anticipated that we would be hearing.

So, rather than focus on whether or not we agree or disagree with the number of benchmarks that have been met, or whether you support the Jones report, I would like to focus a little bit, this morning, on how we move forward, and, to use your words, General Petraeus, your recommendations for the way ahead, because I think that's what people want to know. What happens next, now that we know this information and all this data that has been collected?

And you have been very helpful, General, in outlining the various drawdowns that will take us through to March. Those recommendations will be presented to the President. But, as I listened to your testimony and the comments, I'm struck by the statement that what we are doing with our recommended force-reductions mission shift—and I appreciate the slide that you've got here—we're saying that—and these are your words, General—we are showing the recommended reductions of Brigade Combat Teams—"as the surge runs its course, and, illustrating the concept of our units, adjusting their missions and transitioning responsibility to Iraqis, as the situation and Iraqi capabilities permit." This sounds very much—it sounds identical to what President Bush has been saying all along, that U.S. forces will draw down as the Iraqis are able to stand up.

So, the question is: Is this a change in strategy? Is this a mission shift? Are we continuing the same path that we have laid out before, entirely reliant on the ability of the Iraqis to come together to achieve that political reconciliation, and, unless they are able to do that, we are not able to execute your recommended force reductions?

General.

General PETRAEUS. Well, Senator, thank you. We have, indeed, already been shifting responsibilities to Iraqis in a number of different places around Iraq, some of them surprising places. The most surprising, probably Fallujah, a city in which the—first of all, after us clearing it, in November 2004, we had to bring in an Iraqi Army and substantial coalition forces to hold it, because there were no local young men that would volunteer to serve in the police, or even in the army, for that matter, in Anbar province at that time. We've just completed a process of establishing 10 police precincts in Fallujah, with, actually, gated communities, the same as we do in some of the very difficult ethnosectarian areas, but so that the local individuals in those neighborhoods, those 10 precincts, can actually control access to the areas, have population control, if you will, to keep al-Qaeda out of Fallujah, something that they've worked hard to do. And this has allowed us, not only to thin out our own forces—we do still have a Marine squad or so in each of those precincts, but a substantial amount less than we have in the past—but we're even thinning out the Iraqi Army forces, which, as I mentioned earlier, have gone from three battalions there, most recently, now down to just one, so that the other two can move up and, in fact, replace our forces that are coming out of an area in—the ones that are going home later this month.

Mosul is another example. That city has been under enormous pressure by al-Qaeda. Al-Qaeda has tried to open a second front there, as they did to successfully in November 2004, when they brought the police to their knees in Mosul, as we went into Fallujah. This time, the Iraqi Army and the police have really hung very tough, and we're down to a single combat U.S. battalion there. There's a brigade headquarters also, that has all Ninawa province—again, a smaller force than in the past.

That shows what it is that we are trying to do, and will do, over the course of the months ahead.

It is clearly conditions-based, but we're trying to push the conditions as fast as we absolutely can, without, again, rushing to failure. And what we do not want to do is put ourselves back in the position that we found ourselves, say, in the latter part of 2006, which did enormous damage, frankly, to the entire effort that we had launched.

I believe that my optimism, back when I showed those very fine Iraqi forces to Senator Boxer, was justified. I felt that the—and, by the way, if you read the op-ed piece, I don't think it's all that dramatically optimistic. It was stating what we were doing.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Can I——

General PETRAEUS. A lot of this was undone by that sectarian violence in 2006, which did cause, not just horrific casualties, but it also caused the hijacking of certain elements of the Iraqi security forces by sectarian interests.

Senator MURKOWSKI. I don't want to interrupt that, but I want to ask one very important question that really hasn't been brought up here today, and that's the civilian side. When I was in Iraq and had a sit-down with General Odierno, he said, "As important as the military surge is going to be the civilian surge." And that piece, in his opinion, had not yet played out, had not yet been effective. And,

Ambassador, you have—you've stated that there is "appropriate civilian posture." And I think that that means that you're satisfied with the level of the civilian commitment that you have with your PRTs. Yet, we look at the economy, we recognize—to use your words, "The economy is performing under potential." Is the civilian surge adequate to support the military surge? And, Ambassador, I'm going to, kind of, let you off the hook, because you have said that it is appropriate. General, do you have the support that you need on the civilian side?

General PETRAEUS. We would like to see more. I agree with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who has said, repeatedly, that certain elements of our government are at war—DOD, State, AID—but not all of the others. So, we can use help in those areas. Some of these areas are quite thin—Agriculture, Health, and some others. The PRTs are enormously helpful. We need to make sure that they are filled as they are supposed to be. The protection is, they will be, but that's something we need to watch carefully. And, even, frankly, in our own DOD, the FMS system really has to respond more rapidly, given all of the commitment that the Iraqis have made in becoming one of our bigger foreign military-sales customers. And we've got to try to push that process as rapidly as we can so that we can, in fact, equip them in the way that we had promised to do.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Senator.

Senator Obama.

[The prepared statement of Senator Obama follows:

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. BARACK OBAMA, U.S. SENATOR FROM ILLINOIS

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this hearing and for giving us an opportunity to gather more information about the situation in Iraq. I also appreciate the willingness of General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker to provide an update on the situation from their perspectives. I look forward to their assessment of the situation on the ground in Iraq, a situation that can only be described as grave.

We've heard from the administration and from many of our Senate colleagues this summer that we need to give the President's surge strategy more time before we can make a decision to redeploy our troops. However, two reports issued over the past week paint a bleak picture of the prospects of the current strategy. These reports reinforce the conclusion that there is no military solution in Iraq, that we need to get our troops out of the middle of Iraq's civil war, and that this war must be brought to a responsible conclusion.

The U.S. Government Accountability Office concluded that the Iraqi Government has failed to meet 11 of its 18 benchmarks. Another 4 benchmarks have been only partially met. In particular, GAO cited the failure of the Iraqi Government to enact legislation on de-Baathification, oil revenue sharing, provincial elections, amnesty, and militia disarmament. Moreover, according to GAO, the Iraqi Government has not eliminated militia control of local security, it has not eliminated political intervention in military operations, it has not ensured even-handed enforcement of the law, and it has not increased the number of army units capable of independent operations. The effect of this failure to act has been a high level of sectarian violence that can only be seen as having abated when it is measured against the explosion of violence late last year and early this year.

And last week, an independent commission chaired by GEN James Jones offered a similarly bleak assessment.

The Jones Commission found that the Iraqi security forces will not be able to carry out their essential security responsibilities without assistance for at least 12 to 18 months. The Commission also found that the Iraqi Police Service is incapable of providing adequate security to protect Iraqis from insurgents and sectarian violence and that the National Police is so infiltrated by sectarian militias that it should be disbanded and reorganized.

These independent assessments—and the stunningly bleak NIE released at the end of last month—make clear that there has been zero national political progress.

The consensus from the NIE, GAO, and General Jones is that the Iraqi security forces have made little progress.

Rather than identify the very limited tactical gains that have been made at great cost and using them to justify the maintenance of a failing strategy, I believe it is time to change course. Over 3,700 American service men and women have died in this war and over 27,000 have been seriously wounded. Each month, this misguided war costs us a staggering $10 billion, and when all is said and done, this will have cost us $1 trillion.

Changing the definition of success to stay the course with the wrong policy is the wrong course for our troops and our national security. The time to end the surge and to start bringing our troops home is now—not 6 months from now. The Iraqi Government is not achieving the political progress that was the stated purpose of the surge, and in key areas has gone backward.

Our military cannot sustain its current deployments without crippling our ability to respond to contingencies around the world. It's time for a change of direction that brings our troops home, applies real pressure on the Iraqis to act, surges our diplomacy, and addresses Iraq's urgent humanitarian crisis. I can only support a policy that begins an immediate removal of our troops from Iraq's civil war, and initiates a sustained drawdown of our military presence.

It is long past time to turn the page in Iraq, where each day we see the consequences of fighting a war that should never have been authorized and should never have been waged. We in Congress must take action to change the President's failed policy.

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

Thank you, gentlemen, for your testimony.

Obviously, with 7 minutes, it's a little frustrating, because we're dealing with an extraordinarily complex situation, so I just want to stipulate to a couple of things.

No. 1, the performance of our troops has been outstanding, and we thank them for their service. They have done everything that's been asked of them throughout this process.

No. 2, I think that both of you gentlemen are doing the absolute best that you can, given an extraordinarily difficult situation. And so, I appreciate the work that both of you are doing.

I would say that the mission that's been given to you is what's at issue here in the Senate. The question is one of strategy, not tactics. And the difficulty we have, I think, is that each time we've talked to you, questions have been posed to you about the broader strategy of our war in Iraq, you've punted a little bit, because you've said, "Look, that's a little outside my bailiwick." But, as Senator Feingold pointed out, we don't have limitless resources, and we've got to make these decisions, at least in the Senate, based on priorities and the costs, as well as benefits to pursuing a particular strategy.

I have to say—and this hasn't been commented on—I think that we should not have had this discussion on 9/11 or 9/10 or 9/12, because I think it perpetuates this notion that somehow the original decision to go into Iraq was directly related to the attacks on 9/11. And this is not to relitigate the original decision to go into Iraq. It is to suggest that if the American people and the Congress had understood then that, after devoting $1 trillion, which is what this, optimistically, will end up having cost, thousands of American lives, the creation of an environment in which al-Qaeda in Iraq could operate, because it didn't exist prior to our invasion, that we have increased terrorist recruitment around the world, that Iran has been strengthened, that bin Laden and al-Qaeda are stronger than at any time since 2001, and that the process of Iraqi reconstruction and their standard of living would continue to be lower

than it was preinvasion, that, if that had been the deal, I think most people would have said, "That's a bad deal. That does not make sense. That does not serve the United States strategic interests."

And so, I think that some of the frustration you hear from some of the questioners is that we have now set the bar so low that modest improvement in what was a completely chaotic situation, to the point where now we just have the levels of intolerable violence that existed in June 2006, is considered success. And it's not.

This continues to be a disastrous foreign policy mistake, and we are now confronted with the question: How do we clean up the mess and make the best out of a situation in which there are no good options? There are bad options and worse options. And this is not a criticism of either of you gentlemen, this is a criticism of this President and the administration, which has set a mission for the military and for our diplomatic forces that is extraordinarily difficult now to achieve. And there has been no acknowledgment of that on the part of this administration, so that we have the President, in Australia, suggesting somehow that we are, as was stated before, "kicking A-S-S." How can that—how can we have a President making that assessment? And it makes it very difficult, then, for those of us who would like to join with you in a bipartisan way to figure out how to best move forward, to extricate this from the day-to-day politics that infects Washington.

So, I just wanted to get that on the record.

Final stipulation. I think the surge has had some impact, as I suggested. I would hope it would, given the sacrifices and loss that have been made. I would argue that the impact has been relatively modest, given the investment. And I have to say that, based on my testimony, it is not clear to me that the primary success that you've shown in Anbar has anything to do with the surge. You said, in this testimony, that it's political, the reason for the success in Anbar, not because of an increase in troop strength. We have, maybe, seen some modest decline in sectarian violence inside Baghdad, as a consequence of our troop patrols. That's been purchased at the cost of increased U.S. casualties, and is unsustainable. What we haven't seen is a significant disarming of the Shia militias. I've—again, during your testimony, you've told us that, essentially, the Shias decided, even before we got there, to stand—to get on one knee and to wait it out. We haven't seen, most importantly, any significant improvement, in terms of the central government's performance. It continues to be ineffectual, and we have not seen national reconciliation of the sort that was promised prior to the surge.

So, I just think it's important for us to get all that clear and on the record, because that provides the context in which we are going to have to be making a series of decisions.

That, of course, now leaves me very little time to ask questions. And that's unfortunate.

The CHAIRMAN. That's true, Senator.

Senator OBAMA. Let me——

[Laughter.]

Senator OBAMA. Let me ask—let me, then, just pick up on a question that I think was relevant, and was posed by Senator

Murkowski. And that is, the general theory has been that we will drawdown when Iraqi security forces stand up and/or the Iraqi Government stands up. General Petraeus, in the counterinsurgency manual that you wrote, it says that, "Even the strongest U.S. commitment will not succeed if the populace does not perceive the host nation government as having similar will and stamina to our own."

The question I think that everybody is asking is: How long will this take, and at what point do we say, "Enough"?

Ambassador Crocker, you said, "The patience—the Iraqi people understand that the patience of the American people is not limitless." But that appears to be exactly what you're asking for in this testimony. I don't see, at any point, where you say, "If this fails," or, "If that does not work," or, "If we are not seeing these benchmarks met," or any conditions in which we would make a decision, now, to start drawing down our troops. And you suggest, somehow, that our drawing down troops will not trigger a different set of behaviors on the part of the Iraqis. But I don't see what will. And if we're there, the same place, a year from now, can you please describe for me any circumstances in which you would make a different recommendation and suggest, "It is now time for us to start withdrawing our troops"? Any scenario. Any set of benchmarks that had not been met.

Ambassador CROCKER. Senator, I described, for Senator Sununu, a little bit ago, some of the things that I think are going to be very important as we move ahead.

Senator OBAMA. Can you repeat those? And I know I'm out of time, so I'm just going to ask for both the General and——

The CHAIRMAN. Well, Senator——

Senator OBAMA [continuing]. The Ambassador to answer this.

The CHAIRMAN [continuing]. We are—let me just make it clear, we're not going to have much—these guys have to testify at 2 o'clock. It's in the record. But—why don't you try to summarize, quickly, what you said. OK?

Ambassador CROCKER. OK. I mentioned several points. As General Petraeus has said, what is happening in Iraq is an ethnosectarian competition for power and resources. That's simply the way it is. So, the question is: Is it played out violently or by other ways? So, I think one key indicator is going to be levels of violence, going forward. They've come down substantially, they need to go down farther, and they need to stay down. So, that is obviously something we're going to be looking for.

As they go down and stay down, it's going to be very important to see the kinds of political responses that we saw, for example, in Anbar, and are starting to see in Diyala and a few other places, the degree to which the issues do move to the political arena. And then, related to that, a third point is the linkages, then, that need to develop between the center and the provinces, the outlying areas, as security conditions stabilize, assuming they do.

And the final point, coming back to your comment on militias, I think it's going to be very important to see what happens in the months ahead with respect to the government's ability to take on militia elements in Baghdad and elsewhere.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator.

Senator DeMint.

Senator DEMINT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, General, and Mr. Ambassador, for your service. Whenever I'm frustrated and worried about our country because of the political process, I'll tell you, General, I'm never more proud or optimistic about the future of our country than when I'm standing with our troops somewhere in the world. And I thank you and all of them.

I particularly appreciate both of you for enduring our hearings. As you have found, our hearings are more about listening to ourselves than listening to our witnesses, and I promise to continue that tradition, myself.

I think many of us, or most of us, would admit, at this point, that when we went into Iraq we got into a lot more than we bargained for. We were unprepared, politically and militarily, for the task. The loss of life and injury to our troops, with makeshift bombs, should shame our military and political leaders for our lack of forethought and planning.

Perhaps an even bigger issue is that our approach in Iraq has demonstrated that our own government no longer completely understands how and why freedom works. We have established a premature democracy in Iraq, and it's become increasingly apparent that the private-sector institutions that are necessary to sustain a democracy and a free society do not yet exist in Iraq.

Nevertheless, we're there now and are asking our troops to provide security and maintain order while we work desperately to create a functioning government, military, police force, economic system, and a free society. Our only other choice is to abandon our mission, disgrace our country, dishonor our fallen troops, and leave Iraq, and the whole region, in a deadly turmoil.

Our mission is overwhelmingly complex. The fact that you're both here reporting some success, and that you now believe our goals are attainable, is, in my view, a cause for celebration and will certainly encourage the American people, who, in large part, have been convinced that the war is lost.

We know that your report will be resisted and maligned by many who have staked their political future on the belief that America's goals in Iraq were wrong and that our mission has failed. In my view, the only relevant question now is: Where do we go from here?

General, your recommendation to drawdown troops to the presurge levels is encouraging. Your plan to further reduce troop levels as soon as possible is very welcome.

Ambassador Crocker, your report that some leadership is emerging from within the Iraqi Government is heartening. And I, frankly, believe that if Iraq was located anywhere else in the world, that a functioning democracy would likely emerge in the relatively short term. But it's not located anywhere in the world; it's in the Middle East, with the world's biggest sponsors of terror on its borders and nearby in the region.

So, my question to you both is this: Is there any reasonable expectation for long-term viability of a peaceful, democratic Iraq, as long as the current regime rules in Iran and the conditions in Syria and Saudi Arabia remain the same?

And, Mr. Ambassador, I would just ask you to, maybe, make a political observation; and, General, of just some military and security implications of the border states in the region, for Iraq.

Ambassador CROCKER. It's a great question, Senator. Iraq's problems are difficult enough in their own terms, but they don't play out in their own terms. Iraq's in a rough neighborhood, and that complicates the issue considerably.

I think it can. Iran has been a malign actor in Iraq, but, even with the worst of intentions, there are limits on what Iran can do. Iran is not an Arab state. Iraqi Shia Arabs are not Persians. There is the legacy of an 8-year bitter war between the two countries, in which tens of thousands of Iraqi Arab Shia died for Iraq against the guns of Iran. So, Iran's influence has its limits, and popular tolerance for Iran has its limits, particularly when Iran overreaches. And that's what I think is the significance of the incidents in Karbala, about 10 days ago. It was an Iranian-backed militia element. The fact that it attacked shrine guards on one of the most holy days of the Shia Islamic calendar created a lot of Shia anger, and a lot of that anger was—is directed against the militias, is directed against Iran. So, there are limits to Iran's hostility—or ability to turn its hostility into deeply destabilizing action.

The Arab neighbors may be turning a new page. I mentioned, in my testimony, that Saudi Arabia has now decided to reopen its Embassy in Baghdad. I met with their delegation when they came through, and they said, "Look, it's time to get on with relations with a key Arab country, and that's Iraq."

Jordan's made some positive statements. There are still reservations. There's no question. There is still more they can do. But I think this may be moving in a more positive direction.

Syria is, as I said, problematic. They've hosted a number of—almost a million Iraqi refugees, but they've also allowed a certain number of foreign fighters, suicide bombers, to cross the border. They need to do more.

Senator DEMINT. Thank you.

General PETRAEUS. Senator, I would just pick up on that and say that, first of all, the Ambassador and I have, on several occasions, said that you cannot win in Iraq; just in Iraq. And so, you're absolutely right about the importance of neighboring countries and the influence that they have on the activities in Iraq.

Iraq very much needs Syria to tighten its airport—Damascus, Aleppo—and also its borders, much more to the movement of individuals that come through. They're foreign fighters, some of whom become suicide bombers, and then move through the borders into Iraq.

We believe there are also some training camps over there. It is something the intelligence is still certainly developing to try to determine how accurate that is, but there are concerns about that, as well.

But tightening that, because, again, although al-Qaeda may not be the source of the most violence in certain areas of Iraq, it is the organization that, again, has ignited the ethnosectarian violence, and it is the Sunni Arab organization that generally was carrying out the ethnosectarian violence in Baghdad, as well.

With respect to Iran, we have learned a great deal more about Iranian activities in Iraq since the capture, some months back, of the head of the so-called "special groups" that are associated with Sadr's militia. These are individuals who have been trained, equipped, armed, and funded by Iran. And, along with that individual, we captured the deputy commander of the Lebanese Hezbollah Department 2800, which we had not been aware of, but it turns out to be an organization that has been created to support Iran's activities with respect to the special group and some of the other militia extremists in Iraq.

Again, that makes the situation vastly more difficult for Iraq, obviously, than it otherwise would be. A lot of the munitions that are shot at innocent civilians, shot at our forces, Iraqi forces, certainly those used by these militias, a very large number of those, in fact, come from Iran in the form of the rockets, the explosively formed projectiles, and some of the other arms and munitions that are provided to them.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Senator Menendez.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you both for your service. I admire the extraordinary sacrifice of our men and women in uniform, which is why I believe that we must give them a policy worthy of their sacrifices. And I just don't believe the policy that we've had, or I've heard here today, meets that standard.

General Petraeus, you say in your testimony, "The fundamental source of the conflict in Iraq is competition among ethnic and sectarian communities for power and resources. This competition will"—and you emphasize—"will take place, and its resolution is key to producing long-term stability in the new Iraq."

So, we have the sons and daughters of America dying for Iraqis to compete over power and resources, instead of trying to establish a nation.

General PETRAEUS. Actually, Senator, our mission is to try to help what is an inevitable competition—I have tried to describe this as accurately as I could——

Senator MENENDEZ. And I appreciate——

General PETRAEUS [continuing]. Of ethnosectarian competition——

Senator MENENDEZ [continuing]. It. You say that the——

General PETRAEUS. Our mission——

Senator MENENDEZ [continuing]. Fundamental——

General PETRAEUS [continuing]. Is to——

Senator MENENDEZ [continuing]. The fundamental source——

General PETRAEUS [continuing]. Try to——

Senator MENENDEZ [continuing]. Of the conflict.

General PETRAEUS [continuing]. Get that to be carried out more peacefully rather than more violently. And that is what we are trying to help the legitimate Iraqi forces and the——

Senator MENENDEZ. But at the——

General PETRAEUS [continuing]. Government of Iraq to——

Senator MENENDEZ [continuing]. Core of it—what we're doing is trying to referee, with the lives of Americans, a competition for power and resources, not for building a nation. And, in my mind,

that is a misguided policy from the outset. I appreciate that you put that up front, on page 2 of your testimony. But it seems to me that if we were dying for Iraqis to build a nation, versus edging each other for power and resources, that would be different. But that is clearly not the case. If the "street fight," as Ambassador Crocker said, may go on if we were to leave, it seems to me, you've defined that there is a street fight going on right now over power and resources.

Let me just ask you this. I heard the testimony yesterday, saw the headlines today, but, as I understand it, all you're doing, in terms of reducing the numbers, which has been much heralded, is acknowledging the very same timeline that had largely been established. You're accelerating it somewhat, but you're ending around the same timeline, to bring the surge troops back home. Isn't that a fair statement?

General PETRAEUS. Senator, it is correct that what I am doing is recommending the beginning of the reduction of the surge forces in mid-December, rather than as late as April, if you just ran it all the way until the——

Senator MENENDEZ. But you'll basically——

General PETRAEUS [continuing]. 15-months mark.

Senator MENENDEZ [continuing]. Be there around the same timeframe.

General PETRAEUS. Well, what I'm also not doing, Senator, is recommending continuing the surge or recommending continuing some portion of the surge forces, if you will. So, this is a reduction of forces that are on the ground right now. It will represent one-quarter of our ground combat brigades. And, to a commander, that's a substantial reduction——

Senator MENENDEZ. So, you're——

General PETRAEUS [continuing]. Reduction of forces.

Senator MENENDEZ. But, basically, I think everybody understood that, beyond that type of deployment, it would be very difficult to continue it under any set of circumstances. So, what we're going to end up with, in July of next year, is largely where the administration was at February of this year, before the surge.

General PETRAEUS. It will be the same number of combat brigades that we had in Iraq in——

Senator MENENDEZ. And so, therefore, the——

General PETRAEUS [continuing]. In——

Senator MENENDEZ [continuing]. The policy that we had in——

General PETRAEUS [continuing]. In January of this year.

Senator MENENDEZ. And so, therefore, the policy that we had in February is going to be the policy we're going to have next July, in terms of troops on the ground and what was being achieved.

General PETRAEUS. The mission will be slightly modified, in terms of the emphasis on supporting the Iraqi forces and, as quickly as possible, but without rushing to failure, transitioning tasks to them.

Senator MENENDEZ. I appreciate not rushing to failure, but I'm looking at your chart, the Iraqi Security Forces Capabilities. Now, as I read that chart, I put my ruler across your timeline, and it seems to me that, in the category of "fully independent," they are just about, or less so, than they were in November 2006; that in

the category of Iraqi lead with coalition support, they are just about the same level as November 2006; and only when we get to the category of fighting side by side do we see an increase. So, 11 months later, where we have to depend upon the Iraqis to do a lot of what you're suggesting needs to take place, we are at about the same levels as of November 2006.

General PETRAEUS. And a key reason for that, Senator, is because Iraqis have been fighting and dying, and, in fact, have lost leaders, soldiers, and equipment, which, in fact, has made it difficult for them to maintain their readiness assessments.

I think it's important not to get too fixated on these ORA numbers, the Operational Readiness Assessment numbers, because the fact is that, in a number of provinces in Iraq, you have Iraqi organizations who are not assessed as level 1, because they—just like our own readiness system, they're lacking in some equipment or some leaders or some people——

Senator MENENDEZ. But, General——

General PETRAEUS [continuing]. But they are still performing—in fact, in some cases, completely independently of our forces.

Senator MENENDEZ. You put the chart to substantiate that we're making progress. And——

General PETRAEUS. Oh, I put the——

Senator MENENDEZ [continuing]. Clearly——

General PETRAEUS [continuing]. Chart to inform, Senator.

Senator MENENDEZ. Well, all right.

General PETRAEUS. That was just to lay out——

Senator MENENDEZ. All right. Fine. So——

General PETRAEUS [continuing]. The facts——

Senator MENENDEZ [continuing]. We are now informed——

General PETRAEUS [continuing]. Because this isn't——

Senator MENENDEZ [continuing]. That we are not——

General PETRAEUS [continuing]. This isn't——

Senator MENENDEZ [continuing]. Much better in the two——

General PETRAEUS. I mean, there's been——

Senator MENENDEZ [continuing]. Categories that are critical.

General PETRAEUS [continuing]. A discussion about it, and I want it—to have it out there. It's the same as I put the chart in about the violence trends that have been all over the map——

Senator MENENDEZ. General, with what you know today, if the Commander in Chief said to you, "General Petraeus, how many more years do American soldiers have to continue in Iraq?" what would your answer to him be?

General PETRAEUS. I would give a forthright answer, Senator, which is that I cannot predict that; and I cannot do that to you here, either, today.

Senator MENENDEZ. And if he pressed you, clearly you would give—he would—you would be able to give him some timeline. Two——

General PETRAEUS. I would not——

Senator MENENDEZ [continuing]. Years? Five years?

General PETRAEUS [continuing]. Sir. Sir, I would be doing a disservice to our soldiers if I tried to lay out a specific timeline, at this point, that took us all the way out. What I have done here is laid out for you what our conceptual plan is. And, obviously, we all

want—you know, I'm as frustrated with the situation as anybody else. This is going on 3 years for me, on top of a year deployment to Bosnia, as well, so my family also knows something about——

Senator MENENDEZ. And I——

General PETRAEUS [continuing]. Sacrifice.

Senator MENENDEZ [continuing]. Appreciate that sacrifice——

General PETRAEUS. And what we're——

Senator MENENDEZ [continuing]. And so do——

General PETRAEUS [continuing]. Trying to do is to——

Senator MENENDEZ. There are millions——

General PETRAEUS [continuing]. Get it down as quickly——

Senator MENENDEZ [continuing]. Millions of——

General PETRAEUS [continuing]. As we can.

Senator MENENDEZ [continuing]. Millions of American families who are looking at what is happening to their sons and daughters who are in Iraq today, and some who will be in Iraq tomorrow, including from my home State of New Jersey. And they question: How long is this going to continue, under what circumstances, with what benchmarks? Benchmarks which we've seen to be erased here, even though it is the law. The benchmarks were established, created with the Iraqi Government, signed on by the President, passed by the Congress, signed into law, and now we basically say, "Well, let's forget those benchmarks." That is not something that the American people can continue to be called upon for.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Isakson.

Senator ISAKSON. General Petraeus, Ambassador Crocker, thank you very much for your service. We all admire you.

I think it's instructive to me that in the New York Times poll yesterday, General Petraeus, 60 percent of the people trusted you to make the decisions, and 20 percent of the people trusted us. So, I think we ought to all pay attention to what you've got to say. And that's really a tribute, also, to the job that you have done, and the job that Ambassador Crocker has done, in Iraq.

My memory, at the start of this, was that the United States went into Iraq because of Resolution 1441, passed by the United Nations, where, unanimously, the world thought that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. And we had some faulty intelligence, but we were not alone; the world thought that. The President, in his speech, outlined three specific goals before we went in. One, to depose Hussein and find weapons of mass destruction. Second was to allow the Iraqis to have free elections and write a constitution. And third was to train their military sufficiently to protect that fledgling country.

The way I see it, goals one and two have been met. Hussein was deposed, and the Iraqis tried him in their courts—not us. Weapons of mass destruction weren't found exploding, but their components were there, from buried Scud missiles to massive graves of people that had been killed. Because of our troops, they held three elections, they wrote a constitution, and we're now at the third goal.

Now, yesterday, General Petraeus—or last week—General Jones and his group made an assessment, on the training of the Iraqi military, that we were about 18 months away from them having

their numbers levels met and their training completed. Is that a fair estimate?

General PETRAEUS. I think it is, Senator. Again, what you're talking about is the general structure——

Senator ISAKSON. Right.

General PETRAEUS [continuing]. Because there are already cases, as I mentioned, of units that are performing local security, but then there are other units about which we have concern over sectarian influence. So, again, there is a big mix in there. But, as a generalization, I believe that is correct.

Senator ISAKSON. Well, your point regarding the turnover in Basrah, to the Iraqi Army, when the Brits were leaving—as I remember it, the mosque bomber that was captured and killed 3 weeks ago, that was an Iraqi operation, with only close air support by United States troops, if I'm not mistaken. Is that right?

General PETRAEUS. That's correct. And, in fact, in another case, it is Iraqi Army forces that both identified and then killed the al-Qaeda emir of Mosul, the senior al-Qaeda leader in Mosul, as well. So, there have been some shining examples of Iraqi forces conducting operations, in some cases on their own, in some cases with some support from us. And, certainly, the latter is the model that we're trying to get to. And it works quite well in certain provinces. But, in some other very challenging provinces, we're obviously a long way from that.

Senator ISAKSON. Well, as I read your recommendations, which are reflected by this chart, you are recommending a gradual change from American troops leading the security of Iraq to American military personnel overseeing or overwatching operations in Iraq, and that it has four or five stages, which will be determined by multiple factors, but one significant one will be the number of Iraqi troops that are trained and capable of taking over what's represented as the red here, which is the leadership. Is that right?

General PETRAEUS. That is correct, Senator.

Senator ISAKSON. So, this is really a recommendation for a way forward to reduce American involvement in combat, increase the involvement of the Iraqi troops, and have an oversight—an overwatch, if you will—of those operations by American troops. Is that correct?

General PETRAEUS. That is correct, sir.

Senator ISAKSON. And you can't put a timetable on it, because none of us ever can, but certainly we're in reach, or in sight, of some of those significant goals that were established 5 years ago that would then trigger the ability to make some of those reductions.

General PETRAEUS. That's correct. You know, one thing I have not talked about is the Prime Minister of Iraq establishing 120 percent as the authorized level of personnel. And this will compensate for the challenges they have of the leave program, where soldiers literally have to take money home, or their family doesn't get the money. And, of course, those soldiers are in this for a very, very long time. They are not redeploying at all, they are in the fight, and they will stay in the fight. So, raising that authorization level has already helped bring units up to strength.

The challenge for Iraq, in the months and, really, years ahead—in fact, the challenge in them getting the Operational Readiness Assessment numbers up higher—is going to be leaders. They've lost a number of leaders in combat. They have formed units at a pretty rapid rate, actually, and, you know, it's easy—it's one thing to train an infantryman. It's not easy, but it's one thing to train an infantryman. It's something very different to have a company commander, a battalion commander, or a brigade commander, or their staffs. Those take years of experience and professional military education. They have reached out, actually, to former members of the Iraqi Army, all—of all ethnosectarian backgrounds, recently, which is a pretty important step for them—tens of thousands. They've got about 5,000 or so that they've offered commissions to, or noncommissioned officer positions to, and then others who will move under the retirement rolls, which is significant, as well, because they had not had that status, and others, still, to civilian positions.

Senator ISAKSON. Again, thank you very much for your service.

Ambassador Crocker, you have to dodge verbal bullets, which sometimes are more penetrating than the real ones, I know, and I appreciate all that you've done.

You made a statement in July, the week after the interim report, which has stuck with me. And then, when I read your testimony last night, it came back to me. You said, "Failure to reach benchmarks politically in Iraq should not necessarily be indicative of a lack of progress." And what you stated about some of the local de-Baathification, some of the local reconciliation that's taken place, I presume, was probably what you were referring to at that particular time.

I take it, from what General Petraeus has said, and from what you're saying, is that ground-up, if you will, movement toward de-Baathification and reconciliation is picking up steam. Is that correct?

Ambassador CROCKER. I think it is, sir. But it is also—it's ground-up, but it's also top-down, because the decision to make offers to former military officers, many of them Baath Party members, that was a central government decision. It's just that, rather than address the matter through complex legislation that has been very, very difficult to negotiate, they dealt with it as a specific, immediate issue, finding ways to deal with these former officers. So, you've got both bottom-up and top-down, but neither in the form of comprehensive national legislation.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Senator.

Senator ISAKSON. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Cardin.

Senator CARDIN. Let me first start, as most of my colleagues have, to express my appreciation, on behalf of all the people of Maryland and our Nation, for your service and your leadership and the extraordinary service of our soldiers and the support teams and their families that are—been operating in Iraq.

But I want to follow up on some of the frustration that's been expressed here, not only by the two of you, but by the Members of the United States Senate. And I'm not going to go back to 2002 and 2003—and I could—when I opposed the U.S. military involvement

in Iraq. But the purpose of this hearing is to evaluate the President's surge policy that was implemented in January of this year, and I'd go back to last fall, when we began our national debate on a new chapter for the United States and Iraq. We have just completed national elections. We had the Iraqi—Iraq Study Group Report. And the President made a decision, in January, which was a controversial decision, to surge United States troops in Iraq.

Now, during that debate, there were certain goals and expectations that we expected to be able to achieve through the surge policy. We expected to reduce violence, to set the climate for political reconciliation and accommodation, and reduce U.S. troop levels. That was the expressed goals of our surge policy. It's now time for the Senate and the American people to evaluate what has been achieved by the surge policy.

When we look at violence, I appreciate the charts and information that's been made available today. And, as you know, by our own acknowledgment, violence is too high in Iraq today. We can debate some of the numbers, although there have been other reports that we have received that indicates the violence actually has accelerated in many parts of Iraq. But the National Intelligence Assessment—Estimate—points out that a significant part have been dislocated individuals, people who have moved out of harm's way. And, General, as you pointed out, some of this—numbers are violence of Iraqi soldiers, themselves—1.1 million of displaced people within Iraq, 200,000 in Baghdad itself. Well, that's going to reduce the targets, if they move from the—and participate in being ethnically cleansed. And, of course, the poll today, the Iraqis themselves believe that they are no safer today than they were before the surge.

Senator Menendez pointed out that your chart on the Iraqi security forces indicate that there's been little improvement on level 1 and 2, for whatever reason. And the independent report from General Jones indicates that the national—Iraqi national police force is in terrible shape and could even be disbanded.

So, in regards to violence, we all acknowledge that we have not achieved the objectives that we set out in January of this year.

Now, the second was a climate for political reconciliation and accommodation. Now, here the results are pretty clear. We have, again by your own testimonies, an acknowledgment that the government is dysfunctional. We have the withdrawal of the Sunni Arab consensus front from the government, so the Cabinet is badly numbered, as far as who's participating. The agreed-to benchmarks, which my colleagues pointed out were not our benchmarks, but the administration's benchmarks, have not been achieved in regards to political considerations.

So, we have not made the progress necessary on the political front, which gives—leads us to the third standard that you asked us to judge on, and that is the expectation for the reduction of U.S. troops. And, General Petraeus, you indicate that hopefully within 10 months we will be able to get our troop levels down to 130,000, which is where we started, which is no troop reduction. We're back to where we were before the surge, which doesn't seem to be the goal we set out last January.

So, I'm just suggesting we shouldn't try to change the rules or the evaluation procedures. We failed on our own standards that we set up last January. And that's why a lot of us are frustrated, because, yes, we do want to look forward. Where do we go from here?

And now, we all agree we need to increase diplomacy; we need a stronger diplomatic effort. But, Ambassador Crocker, I guess the question I would like to ask you is: In this climate, where it's perceived, if it's not reality, that America is the occupation force in Iraq, and there's little motivation for other countries or entities to take proprietary interest in trying to help the Iraqis, diplomatically, when we're trying to get international organizations, including the United Nations, and, I hope, OSCE, which we're using now in Afghanistan, what motivation is there, with the United States taking on just about the complete burden, outside the Iraqi themselves, in trying to help the Iraqis—what incentive is there to help in training the security forces, in helping provide the security they need, in helping to train the different public agencies that are needed in Iraq, to establish the type of government they need, from the judiciary to their utilities—what incentive is there for other countries to get involved, or organizations to get involved?

Ambassador CROCKER. Senator, I think there is a growing realization in the region and in the international community that what happens in Iraq is important to the world. And I think that is why you have seen some of the things I described in my testimony, of both regional and international initiatives that are developing some momentum. I talked a little bit about the neighbors forum that brings all of Iraq's neighbors, plus the P5 and the——

Senator CARDIN. And that was a positive development. But my point is this, that as long as the United States continues its military presence in Iraq, which is not popular internationally, the incentives for diplomatic help and on-the-ground help, is marginalized.

Ambassador CROCKER. Senator, I'd give you a slightly different view on that. I mentioned the new mandate for the United Nations assistance mission in Iraq——

Senator CARDIN. Which you mentioned earlier.

Ambassador CROCKER. Right. They've got a much more ambitious and robust mandate now than they did in the past. And it is the intention of the Secretary General that the United Nations be more active in Iraq. They——

Senator CARDIN. With most of those countries disagreeing with our military policy.

Ambassador CROCKER. Well, the United Nations will be looking to us, and our military, in particular, to help facilitate their security, which we're already doing, and to help ensure the safety of their movements. So, not only is there not an aversion to us, as the military—the primary military force on the ground, there is the hope and expectation that we will use those security assets to assist an international mission.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator.

Senator Vitter.

Senator VITTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to begin, as almost all of my colleagues have, by thanking you both for your very dedicated, very impressive, very courageous

public service. And I would like to take this opportunity to salute the courage of all of our men and women in uniform, and, indeed, all of our citizens serving in Iraq, including those out of uniform as well. This may sound predictable or trite, but, given our current political environment, and given that today is 9/11, I think it's important that we all recognize the service of our men and women in uniform, and how important it is to our Nation's security. I really hope all of us join together on the Senate floor and pass an amendment, that's on the Senate floor now, specifically decrying the MoveOn.org personal attack against you, General Petraeus. I hope we all join in doing that.

At this point of the hearing, it is difficult to ask an original question, but I think I may have one for you. I haven't heard it asked during this discussion, or all month. General Petraeus, you have said several times, and I believe correctly, that we do not want to rush to failure. I certainly agree with that. What gives you complete confidence that even the redeployment you have mapped out over the next several months might not, in retrospect, be rushing to failure, given that it is a somewhat earlier end to the surge than previously suggested?

General PETRAEUS. Well, again, there have been developments, both on the ground in local areas and with Iraqi security forces. With respect to the local developments—again, I don't want to replay Anbar province yet again, but, I mean——

Senator VITTER. Well, if I could, let me put the question to you in a different way.

General PETRAEUS. Sure.

Senator VITTER. Our time in Iraq has, so far, been characterized by two fairly consistant factors. The first is an unstable and unpredictable security environment, which has resulted in large up-and-down swings in violence and perceived success and failure on the ground. The second, at least until the surge in troops was fully implemented, is that we have had fewer troops on the ground, in retrospect, than necessary for the mission at hand. So, let me ask it this way: Why not have more of a cushion against a backslide into instability and greater violence because of too few troops and delay redeployment rather than ending the surge earlier than absolutely necessary?

General PETRAEUS. Again, the reasons for the timing and the locations have to do with the so-called battlefield geometry and the other considerations that I laid out, including, again, a keen sense of awareness of the strain that this has put on our ground forces, in particular, and their families, and those of other high-demand, low-density assets, as they're called.

Our sense—General Odierno, myself, other commanders—is that we can do what we have recommended doing, based on, again, the progress that's been achieved in these various areas where we expect to thin down, to redo the—again, the tactical geometry, in this case, and the developments of Iraqi security forces in those areas.

And, again, it may be that the unit is not an ORA–1, or maybe even ORA–2, because of some kinds of shortages of equipment or leaders, in particular. Iraq just can't find more leaders. There's not—they're not sitting on the shelf out there, that you can just draw on and put into battalion command or other positions. So,

there are going to be units that may not be at the level we'd like them to be at. However, they may still end up being capable of doing what is needed to be done in that area, particularly, again, when you can get the level of violence down, and the level of local support up.

It's just a lot easier to be a cop on the beat now in Ramadi or Fallujah than it has been at any time since liberation, because the locals support them.

Yes; it is—that is a political development, but our forces then enabled, and took advantage of, along with Iraqi forces, that opportunity. So, the opportunity finally presented itself, and we made the most of it, I believe, together with our Iraqi counterparts. And now, the national government has tried to support that, and reinforce it, by making these individuals part of these national ministries, paying their salaries, providing equipment, and so forth—never enough, always want more, logistical systems are inadequate, and so forth—but that's all coming along, and you can see your way forward——

Senator VITTER. General, let me ask you this——

General PETRAEUS [continuing]. In that regard

Senator VITTER [continuing]. Because I think it's related. On page 6 of your testimony, you say "long-term U.S. ground-force viability will benefit from force reductions as the surge runs its course." What exactly do you mean by that?

General PETRAEUS. Well, again, that is taking into account, again, a very keen awareness of the strain that we have put on the Marines and the Army, in particular. We've asked an extraordinary amount of them. Were we to have continued the surge beyond, really, what is programmed right now, would have required extraordinary measures, and we've got to help the Army and the Marine Corps, the—our military at large—sort of, reconstitute some of its forces to get longer dwell time. Again, as I mentioned, I'm pretty personally aware of the strain that this does put on our families. I was also in an assignment with the Army before this, where we oversaw some 18 different schools and centers, and I got to see lieutenant—really, captains, more importantly, and midgrade NCOs, who have served one, two tours, and have the prospect of going back. So, again, there's an awareness of that, that I think is very important. And it's also important, if you do see that you're going to be engaged in Iraq, albeit at a much-less level, you do have to have the assets to do that, over time, as well.

Senator VITTER. Mr. Ambassador, are there lessons from the bottom-up regional-based, province-based reconciliation progress that are applicable to the central government?

Ambassador CROCKER. I think there are.

Senator VITTER. What are they? And how do we get the central government to learn them and act on them?

Ambassador CROCKER. Well, the——

The CHAIRMAN. Ambassador, if you can make it brief, you have two more folks, and I know you have to leave, so—it's up to you, but——

Ambassador CROCKER. Yes, sir; I'll be brief.

The most important lesson is the one that the central government is already demonstrating it has picked up, and that is recog-

nizing, supporting, and reaching out to political—positive political change when it occurs at the grassroots level. That's what they've done in Anbar, that's what they're doing in Diyala, that's what they've done closer to Baghdad, just to the west, and that is what I—that is—probably the single most important lesson from this is being sure that provincial development and central government are linked.

Senator VITTER. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Casey.

Senator CASEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker, we appreciate your presence here, and we appreciate your extraordinary service to the country. I want to say, personally, when Senator Durbin and I were in Baghdad, I appreciated the time you spent with us there and the information you provided.

General, I'll start with you, and direct your attention to the overall question of Iraqi security forces and the training of those forces. I just have a couple of questions along those lines.

First of all, General, it's true, isn't it, that you were the commander of the training mission in Iraq from October 2004 to September 2005—or through September 2005?

General PETRAEUS. It was from June 2004 to early September 2005.

Senator CASEY. Through early September 2005.

General PETRAEUS. Right.

Senator CASEY. And you'd agree with me, wouldn't you, that, in terms of that assignment, that you had to learn a great deal about the training mission and the importance of that, is that correct?

General PETRAEUS. Certainly. Absolutely.

Senator CASEY. And I'm looking at an excerpt here from the National Intelligence Estimate from just recently, where they say, in part, and I'm quoting, "We"—meaning those 16 intelligence agencies—"We judge that the Iraqi security forces have not improved enough to conduct major operations independent of the coalition on a sustained basis in multiple locations, and that the ISF remain reliant on the coalition for important aspects of logistics and combat support."

Just in light of the National Intelligence Estimate, that particular part of it, do you have any reason to refute that, or do you have any evidence to suggest that that particular assertion is false?

General PETRAEUS. No; I think that's correct. As I mentioned earlier, Senator, we've had a number of experiences where we have, indeed, seen that it is one thing to train infantrymen, or even battalions of infantrymen, even brigades; it is yet—and much, much more—to help an institution be reestablished, to help, literally, to rebuild depot systems, logistical structures, to—you know, in—candidly, in the early fall of 2004, there were—there was no doctrine, there were no manuals, there was not even a parts system at all, there was—there were—in fact, there was no depot, either; there were also no parts. But, again, the magnitude of reestablishing the institutional underpinnings of the Iraqi Army and the other military services, and of the Iraqi police services, has been an enormous task, and enormously challenging, particularly because, as I

mentioned earlier, it really took steps backward during the ethnosectarian violence, the height of that, in 2006, where units of the national police, in particular, were really hijacked by sectarian interests. And that is something that Iraq is still dealing with today, despite the Minister of Interior having replaced national police commander, two division—both division commanders, all the brigade commanders, and 17 or 27 battalion commanders, and they still have work to be done.

Senator CASEY. And I'd ask you, also, with regard to the report on the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq, the so-called Jones Report, which, of course, was an independent report put together by distinguished individuals in the military and law enforcement. One of their conclusions was that the Iraqi security forces—or the—yeah, the Iraqi security forces would continue to rely upon coalition forces for key enablers, such as combat support, combat support service, and supply-chain management and training, and, because of that, they say they will not be ready to independently fulfill their security role in the next 12 to 18 months.

Also, in the GAO report, not only do they make the finding that the measure of increasing the number of Iraqi security forces—security-force units capable of operating independently, but that benchmark was not met. They also mention, in the GAO report, that we've spent $19.2 billion to train and equip Iraqi security forces.

I think you know that—where I'm headed, in terms of those particular reports.

And, finally, with regard to data—and I'm holding up your Iraqi Security Force Capabilities chart. And, of course, when we're talking about the levels, just so those who are listening understand what we're talking about, you referred, earlier, to Operational Readiness Assessment ratings, levels 1 through 4, level 1 being the highest level of readiness. And, as you can see, and as the chart—your chart—clearly indicates, the green section, meaning the level-1 readiness, that they can independently take on the enemy, has increased virtually not at all since—in the last year and a half, so to speak, April 2006 until the present.

I say all that, and I point to all that, because, when you see that data and those reports, two of which are put together by, I think, clearly and unambiguously, independent sources, and then you juxtapose that data about their security forces not being ready, not being prepared at level-1 readiness, which has to be our goal, and then I compare that, or juxtapose that, to some of your statements. You said, yesterday in your testimony, that, "We have challenges ahead. The coalition and Iraqi security forces have made progress toward achieving sustainable security." In October 2005, you talked about "enormous progress" with Iraqi security forces. September 2004, you asserted that, "We have—we've seen"—or, you said, "I see," in your case, "tangible progress for the Iraqi security forces."

And I'd just ask you, when you look at both of those, your testimony and your references to progress at different points in time, and the reality of what's not happening with regard to Iraqi security forces, I think you can understand—and I'd ask you to comment on this——

General PETRAEUS. Sure.

Senator CASEY [continuing]. Not just the general frustration that we feel, but, frankly, some of the skepticism we feel about your assertions in the past, your assertions here, as it compares to what the reality is on that particular question of the Iraqi security forces.

General PETRAEUS. Well, actually, I appreciate the opportunity to address that, Senator.

I really don't think that saying that one sees tangible progress is an extraordinary statement. I did see tangible progress. Iraq had gone from zero battalions, in May or so, to, I think, at that point in time, a modest number of eight or nine. That's tangible progress. We were reestablishing a whole variety of different structures. They were training. I mean, it was—that's what it was. And if you read the rest of the op-ed, there's also qualifications. It talks about challenges, it likens, I think, the effort to, you know, building the world's biggest aircraft while in flight and while being shot at, at the same time.

I think it's very important—and I've tried to mention this earlier—not to get too hung up on ORA–1 or ORA–2. Those are readiness assessments that we established, actually, a couple of years ago, I think, and it has to do with, you know: Do they have a certain percentage of the people they're supposed to have, the leaders, the equipment, and a variety of other assessments?

Senator CASEY. Let me just——

General PETRAEUS. That doesn't——

Senator CASEY [continuing]. Interrupt you one——

General PETRAEUS [continuing]. Doesn't mean——

Senator CASEY. That still has to be the goal, though. Doesn't level 1 have to be the——

General PETRAEUS. Well, certainly. As I said in my long statement, we take that very seriously, and we want to fix all those shortcomings. But the fact is that I don't know that they're going to be able to fix some of the shortcomings in the number of noncommissioned officers, in particular, or number of officers. It just takes time to develop them. And, let's remember, they've taken serious losses. And I would state, again, that one big difference between October 2005, or whenever it was that I had some optimism—and, actually, my words, already, even at that time, if you look at any briefing to your colleagues, was "qualified optimist." And I've dropped even "optimist," at this point, and just say "realist." But the point really is that a unit may not have all the NCOs it had—it's supposed to have. It may not reach the level for ORA–1, where it's supposed to have—to do independent operations. It still may do independent operations. And that is the case in a number of different areas. And it depends a great deal, actually, on the local conditions. If we can get the local conditions to a better state, as, say, is the case in—say, in Nasariyah or Anbar, even, or some of the other areas, then all of a sudden they can actually do reasonably well. Even without having, sort of, met these criteria, they're actually doing it. In fact, we have some other criteria that just asks the assessment of: Can they do independent operations?—just judgment—as opposed to: Do they have all the equipment? You know, every time they lose a piece of equipment in combat, which happens fairly frequently, it's—until they can get their logistical struc-

tures set up, it's just going to drive them down that readiness. And I put the slide in there to be up front, to show, in fact, that they did go backward in some areas between last year, because of the sectarian violence and the tough fighting.

So, I think, again, we don't want to get too fixated on these ORAs. They're important indicators. We need to try to help them, everywhere we can, to get those levels up, just as we would with our own units. But it doesn't mean that they cannot be conducting, actually, independent operations because they're ORA–2 instead of ORA–1, if that makes sense to you.

Senator CASEY. I know I'm out of time.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Senator.

Senator CASEY. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Webb, God love you, as my mother would say.

Senator WEBB. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, I know you have had a long day, and have got a long day ahead of you. And, actually, I do, too, because I'm on Armed Services Committee, as well. So, regard me as a transitional interrogator, here. As soon as I'm done, I'm going to step over there, where Senator Vitter was, and await your return.

I have three observations that I would like to make, just a result of the give-and-take on the hearings, and then a question for you, General Petraeus.

The first observation I'd like to make is: I think that you understand, both of you—and I hope most people understand—that one of the reasons we're struggling so hard with this is that there are a large number of people in this country who had national-security experience, who believed that this war was a horrendous strategic blunder. I mean, people like General Scowcroft and General Zinni and General Hoar, who both commanded CENTCOM. And so, we're trying to find a way to work the United States out of this situation without further destabilizing the region. And, I know, Ambassador Crocker, when you were talking of the consequences of failure, there were many of us who were pointing out that those were actually going to be the consequences of an invasion, if we invaded. And so, that's the conundrum that we're in, here, that so much of this discussion is based on.

The second observation would be—I would have to associate myself with something that Senator Obama said when he was talking about all of the events that have occurred in Al Anbar province. And I think you should be careful about how much of that you actually attribute to the surge. I say that from some personal perspective of my own—my son fought as an infantry marine in the worst sections of Ramadi for the last 4 months of last year and the first 5 months of this year. Actually, it was extended as a result of the surge. But the last 4 months of 2006 were pretty tough months for the 1st Battalion 6th Marines, and they have been given a great deal of credit for the turnaround there, just as a point of observation.

The third is that I was watching, and reading about, the hearings yesterday, something did return to my mind, and that was the hearings of 2002. Watching government witnesses during those hearings was one of the reasons I decided to eventually get into

elective politics, because, when the questions were being asked of them in those hearings—over a period of a year, not just the hearings leading up to the vote on going to war—the question was always: How long are we going to be in Iraq? And the answer was always a litany; it was, "As long as is necessary, and not one day more." I would venture that I heard that said 50 times, watching different hearings. And we're looking for some specificity. That is the point.

And the other thing that occurred to me, reading, this morning, the results of that, was a statement that General Eisenhower made in 1952, when he was deciding to run for President, talking about the fact that the Korean war had gone on for 2 years and needed to be resolved. And he said, "When the enemy struck, what did America do? It did what it has always done in times of peril, it appealed to the heroism of its youth. The answer to that appeal has been what any American knew it would be, it has been sheer valor, fresh scars, new graves. Now, in this anxious autumn from these heroic men there comes back an answering appeal. It is no whine, no whimpering plea. It is a question that addresses itself to simple reason. It asks: Where do we go from here? When comes the end? Is there an end?" And Eisenhower said, "The first task is to bring the Korean war to an early and honorable end." An early and honorable end.

And when I look at all of this debate about the surge, the first thing I would say is, this is not a strategy—it was not a change in strategy, in my view, in any sense of the word, unless we were able to put into a strong diplomatic effort. And what you're calling reconciliation, Ambassador Crocker, you've spent your entire life in that region; I have enormous respect for what you've done—I don't see reconciliation, I see, maybe, an attempt at conciliation, somehow to bring Iraq together. But without those this is simply a tactical adjustment. And the one inarguable result of this—the surge policy has been the disruption of the rotational cycles of deployment for our soldiers and our marines. On the one hand, we had the viewpoint of General Casey, that fewer Americans on the streets of Iraq's cities would require the Iraqis to take greater responsibility for their own future.

We had Admiral Fallon testifying before the Armed Services Committee in his confirmation hearing, essentially saying the same thing, that it wasn't the number of troops, it was the missions that they were being assigned. On the other, we have this policy, which has resulted in extended tours, 15-month deployments for soldiers, with only 12 months at home, and a situation that I personally—and, looking at data, also—have come to believe is very perilous to the well-being of the Volunteer Army, it's system, the volunteer military system, and to the well-being of these people, just the plain well-being of these people. And we are the stewards of these people. Our traditional policy, from the time that I was in the Marine Corps, was "two for one." If you're gone a year, you're back 2 years. If you're gone 6 months, you're back a year. The British, in Iraq, had a policy of "four to one." Six-month deployment, two years back. The policy right now, particularly on the Army side, is "three-quarters to one."

General Petraeus, what is your view of that policy, that dwell-time policy?

General PETRAEUS. Senator, my view is that I obviously would like to see our soldiers and our marines and other—all forces—have more time with their families between deployments. It's one reason that, on the record in that confirmation hearing, I believe I stated that our ground forces, in fact, because of the strain and so forth, needed to be larger.

In this mission, though, I am the Multinational Force–Iraq Commander, and what I've been charged to do, and I think what all of you want me to do, or what Americans should want a commander on the ground to do, is the best he can to accomplish the military tasks associated with the policy that has, in fact—from which that mission is derived.

Senator WEBB. So, what is your view of a one-to-one floor for troops?

General PETRAEUS. Senator, again, just as a general proposition, the more time that our soldiers can have at home with their families, obviously, is the better. And, as I mentioned, I, also, am acquainted with that, personally, and I'm also very keenly aware of the stress and strain that this has put on our ground forces, in particular, and, as I said, some of the other high-demand, low-density assets.

Senator WEBB. Here's the difficulty that I have. And it's the reason that I put this amendment into the system. When the Army went to 15 months, General Casey, as Chief of Staff, called me to inform me, and I said, "How can you do this? How can you cause people to serve 15-month deployments with the supposed good news that they're going to get 12 months at home? It just violates everything that I've ever heard about, from the day I was born, being around the United States military." He said, "We feed the strategy. They tell us the number of people that they need, and we feed the strategy." And then, from the strategic side, it's, "We build the strategy, and they feed us the troops." And somewhere in here, in my view, there has to be the notion that, after 4½ years in Iraq, we need to be shaping the operational environment to the well-being—on a floor for our troops.

General PETRAEUS. Senator, that is—as I mentioned, that is something that very much informed my recommendation. In fact, as I mentioned, several of the brigades will, in fact, come out before the 15-month mark because of the way that we will be withdrawing brigades without replacement. And the strain on the force, again, was very much one that informed the recommendations that I have made, and it will inform the recommendations that I made for the point beyond—which we've already made recommendations on.

Senator WEBB. Well, my time is up, Mr. Chairman. I may want to revisit this a little bit in the next hearing.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator, I hope you do.

Gentlemen, I appreciate your testimony, and I think it's long past time we level with the American people.

You know, General, you talk about the ORA, whether it's 1 or 2. That doesn't mean anything to the American people. What they want to know is what they were promised, and that is, when an

Iraqi force can be able to supplant an American force. And, with all due respect to both of you—you're not setting the overall strategic doctrine here—I don't see anything that leads to an early and honorable end to this war. The truth is, we're going to be down to prewar level—presurge levels next summer. And the truth is, if you listened to all the testimony, it's going to be at least a year after that before you're going to have Iraqi troops, at a minimum, be able to replace American troops. You're talking about American troops being there in the numbers like they're in now, 130,000, for a couple more years, if you level with the American people. And there is no clear political plan the administration is pushing—none whatsoever.

In my conversation with my chairman, here, Senator Lugar, and others, the idea that we have a generic plan, other than "stand up the Iraqis" and "bring together the folks in Baghdad for a government that is not engaging in a competition for power among ethnoreligious groups" is—I don't see any of it, and I think the obligation we have is to bring this to an early and honorable end. And I don't see—I respect you both very much. You've given great tactical judgments here about what's going on. But I don't see any plan, in terms of leveling with the American people, where you're going to—we're going to be able to tell them their kids are coming home, being able to be replaced, either because you have a unity government in Baghdad and/or—and the end of sectarian violence or Iraqis who can take over for all the American forces there.

But you have a long day. You've had a long day. I look forward to being able to continue to talk with you fellows. I wish you luck in the next hearing. And, God love you, I don't know how your physical constitution is going to handle this, going straight through. I hope you get a few minutes to get—someone bought you a sandwich or something.

So, thank you both for your testimony.

We're adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 1:55 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

RESPONSES OF AMBASSADOR RYAN CROCKER TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY SENATOR JOSEPH BIDEN

Question. On September 15, the International Organization for Migration estimated that roughly 1.06 million Iraqis had been internally displaced since February 2006. On July 31, the Iraqi Red Crescent put the number at more than 1.12 million displaced since February 2006 and reported that "the number of displaced people is increasing at a rate of 80,000–100,000 each month," up from about 40,000 a month between February and December 2006.

- What is the Department of State's best estimate as to the rate at which Iraqis are being displaced from their homes?

Answer. The Department of State does not have an independent estimate of the number of internally displaced Iraqis. Official statistics on Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are maintained by the Iraq Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MODM). As of September 2007, the MODM, based on information developed with the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), International Organization for Migration (IOM) and its partners, estimates that an average of 60,000 individuals per month are being displaced from their homes.

Increases in registrations of displaced persons are caused by:

- First-time newly displaced individuals;
- New registrations from past displacements (post-February 2006);

- Old case (pre-February 2006) registrations;
- Increased capabilities to register IDPs by the Iraqi Government; and
- Secondary or tertiary displacements.

Question. How many Iraqis do you estimate have been displaced within Iraq (as internally displaced persons) since February 2006?

Answer. The International Organization for Migration, drawing on figures from the Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration, estimates that approximately 1.1 million Iraqis have been internally displaced since February 2006.

Question. How many Iraqis do you estimate have fled outside of Iraq, as refugees, since February 2006?

Answer. UNHCR estimates that 1.4 million Iraqi refugees are in Syria and Jordan, the two primary countries of refuge for Iraqis, with smaller numbers in Egypt and other countries. Until recently, Syria and Jordan were issuing entry permits at their borders to Iraqis and were not tracking these permits. Therefore, there is no accurate data on the number of Iraqis who have entered Syria and Jordan and remained there after the expiration of their permits. During most of 2006, UNHCR was reporting that as many as 2,000 Iraqis per day had been entering Syria and 1,000 had been entering Jordan, but those estimates do not account for returns of businesspeople, tourists, etc. In early 2007, Jordan effectively closed its land border to Iraqis and Syria has announced plans to begin imposing a visa requirement on Iraqis as of October 15.

Question. What is the Embassy doing to provide assistance to internally displaced persons within Iraq?

Answer. The U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) is the lead agency on issues related to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Iraq. Focusing largely on post-February 2006 IDPs, USAID/OFDA assisted approximately 550,000 Iraqi beneficiaries in FY 2007, which included IDPs and host community citizens and families. OFDA funds activities through five NGO and international organization partners to implement a program that spans all of Iraq's 18 governorates in the following sectors:

- Health;
- Water and Sanitation;
- Nonfood Relief Item Distribution;
- Temporary Shelter Improvements;
- Income Generation;
- Host Community Support; and
- IDP Data Collection and Analysis.

Some projects are multisectoral. A typical example would include expanding a school and upgrading its water and sanitation facilities to accommodate IDP children, while simultaneously providing jobs for IDPs with the work involved and supporting the host community through the school improvements.

Question. To what extent are Iraq's ethnic and religious minority communities (i.e, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Mandeans, Sabeans, Shabaks, Turkmen, Yazidis) impacted by these population movements?

Answer. Reporting from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and statistics gathered by the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) in Jordan and Syria indicate that the makeup of the externally and internally displaced Iraqi population is in rough proportion to the overall population in Iraq. Therefore, minority communities are also being displaced, with many moving north to Ninawa province and the Kurdish region.

Question. What steps is the Embassy taking to ensure the safety of its current or former Iraqi Foreign Service nationals, and that of their families?

Answer. Ensuring the safety of Iraqi Foreign Service national (FSN) employees and their families is a top priority for the Department of State and a matter of urgency, which the Embassy has taken immediate steps to address. The Department has developed processes to allow Iraqis at risk of violence owing to their association with the United States Government to be considered for admission to the United States as refugees on a priority basis. Our Embassy in Baghdad is making referrals to the U.S. refugee program, and the direct access program established in Jordan allows employees of the U.S. Mission in Iraq and employees of other U.S. entities to proceed directly to prescreening for resettlement in the United States.

Under existing law, Iraqi translators/interpreters working with the U.S. military or under Chief of Mission authority also have access to a special immigrant visa (SIV) program that provides an opportunity to emigrate to the United States with

their immediate family. The Embassy has established a Special Immigrant Visas (SIV) Review Committee and has procedures in place to assist in processing SIV applications. The administration has put forth legislation that, if passed, would allow the Department discretion to lower the minimum years of service for all FSNs serving in extraordinary conditions, such as our Iraqi employees, to become eligible for SIV consideration.

Question. How many of its current or former Iraqi Foreign Service nationals does the Embassy estimate have been displaced either within Iraq?

Answer. The Embassy does not track the location of Iraqi locally employed staff after they have departed the mission unless they seek admission to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. To date, the Refugee Coordinator at Embassy Baghdad has referred 67 cases of Iraqis who have worked with the USG to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) for consideration of resettlement in the United States; these 67 former employees would be considered externally displaced. In addition, 36 Iraqi employees have resigned due to security concerns; however, we do not have a way to determine how many of them have left the country or relocated within Iraq.

Question. How many State Department Iraqi Foreign Service nationals have been referred to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for resettlement to the United States and what efforts, if any, has the Embassy made on their behalf?

Answer. USG-affiliated Iraqis, including Foreign Service nationals who have worked for the Department of State in Iraq, are being referred for resettlement consideration to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) by UNHCR, our embassies in the region (including Embassy Baghdad), and the Department of State. Some 530 individuals in this category have been referred by embassies or the Department of State during 2007, and UNHCR has referred an additional few hundred Iraqis with links to the United States.

Question. To what extent does ethnic cleansing account for the diminution in the level of sectarian violence in Iraq, especially in Baghdad?

Answer. Many of Iraq's provinces, and Baghdad in particular, have seen a decrease in sectarian violence since the beginning of Operation Fardh al-Qanoon and the surge in U.S. forces. A number of factors are at work, in our view. There are fewer mixed neighborhoods in Baghdad as the city becomes increasingly segregated. Moqtada al-Sadr has ordered the Jaysh al-Mandi to stand down. Some Sunni groups formerly involved in sectarian violence have begun cooperating with us. But there are no data to determine the specific impact of increasing segregation on the diminution of sectarian violence.

Question. On August 14 a series of coordinated attacks devastated Qahtaniya and other nearby Yazidi villages in northern Iraq, killing more than 500 civilians according to some accounts. This atrocity is the worst example of the tremendous stress facing Iraq's ethnic and religious minorities.

- What is the Embassy doing to provide humanitarian assistance for the victims of the August 14 bombings?

Answer. The Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Ninawa worked with USAID's implementing partners to assist affected Yezidi villages. Following the August 14 attacks, coalition forces worked with the Iraqi Government and Kurdistan Regional Government, the Iraqi Army, and local and provincial governments to provide relief to the villages. PRT Ninawa and USAID implementing partners are continuing to work with local governments to strengthen their capacity to rebuild and respond to disasters. In subsequent meetings with Yezidi leaders, PRT Ninawa was informed that the immediate needs of the two villages had been met. PRT Ninawa, USAID and coalition forces continue to address medium- to long-term needs.

Question. What is the Embassy doing to protect Iraq's fragile ethnic and minority groups (such as Yazidis, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Mandeans, Sabeans Shabaks, Turkmen, etc.) from terrorist and sectarian attacks, ethnic cleansing physical intimidation, and economic dislocation?

Answer. Embassy officials meet regularly with representatives of Iraq's ethnic and minority groups and raise their concerns with the appropriate Iraqi Government officials, including the Minister of Human Rights. The Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Ninawa, Kirkuk, and Arbil—provinces with large minority communities—also meet often with representatives from ethnic and other minority groups and work to ensure that their concerns are heard at the provincial government level.

The position of these groups in Iraq will become more secure as they develop the capability to advocate on their own behalf and participate actively in the political

system. U.S. Government-sponsored programs offer assistance to individuals and groups (from the government and civil society) that request such assistance in areas such as conflict resolution, political party development, human rights, and women's advocacy. However, these programs are not conducted for specific minority groups based on ethnic affiliation.

The Embassy and PRTs, together with coalition forces, are working at the national and provincial level to help the Iraqi Government provide the necessary protection and safety for all its citizens, including minority communities.

Question. What is the Embassy doing to ensure that these ethnic and minority groups benefit from U.S. reconstruction assistance, particularly in the Ninawa governorate?

Answer. Since our goal is to foster a single national identity in Iraq that crosses Iraq's diverse political and cultural landscape, we do not earmark or track funds based on religious or ethnic identity. Rather, USG assistance is based on needs. Minority communities in need in Iraq benefit from various USG assistance projects, including the following: The Iraq Community Action Program, which works with underserved communities to form grassroots groups that develop community-driven projects; humanitarian programs aimed at improving the quality of child health services in Ninawa; humanitarian programs in Ninawa designed to fill gaps in emergency assistance; and nonfood assistance in 15 of 18 provinces in Iraq. According to February 2007 information from the Ninawa Provincial Reconstruction Team, from 2004–2007 approximately $31.3 million in USG funds were allocated to two districts in the Ninevah Plains (al-Hamdaniya and Tel Kaif) with majority Christian populations.

Additionally, the Government of Iraq and provincial governments have become more effective at allocating and spending their own capital budgets. The Ninawa province has been allocated approximately $226 million by the central government for capital projects in 2007. Provincial allocations were based on population density, which helps to ensure they are distributed in an equitable manner. Provincial reconstruction teams are working closely with the Ninawa province to provide technical assistance and capacity in committing these Government of Iraq resources for reconstruction and delivery of essential services.

Question. Some Iraqi parliamentarians have called for the creation of an autonomous region in the Ninevah Plains, home to a disproportionate number of Iraqi minorities, including Assyrians, Turkmen, and Yazidis. What has been the reaction of the Maliki government to such proposals? What is the Embassy's position on the best way to provide physical and economic security for these fragile communities?

Answer. Some Iraqi parliamentarians and local politicians in Ninawa have called for an autonomous region in Ninawa province, citing Article 125 of the Iraqi Constitution. Iraqi citizens can pursue the creation of a separate administrative region through processes consistent with this article. The best way to provide physical and economic security for vulnerable Iraqis is to help build a democratic, stable, and prosperous Iraq with a security force that provides protection for all of Iraq's citizens.

Question. The benchmarks report, released on September 14, says, "In the coming months, our strategy will increasingly focus on helping the Iraqis knit together this new 'bottom up' progress with the 'top down' political process." The interim benchmarks report referred to this process as "latching up."

- Can you provide concrete examples of this "latching up"?

Answer. The best example of "latching up" is the central government's passing investment funds to the provinces so they can fund infrastructure and development projects. This has happened across the country and provides a "latch-up" necessary for effective governance. The sharing of oil revenues by the central government with the provinces in an equitable manner—despite the lack of a national oil revenue-sharing law—provides a similar example.

A third example involves security, with the central government authorizing the integration of citizens involved in locally formed protection forces into the Iraqi Army and police forces.

Question. Are there indicators we can look to in the months to come on how effective the "latching up" is?

Answer. The political process of linking "bottom up" and "top down" accommodation efforts is complex and will take time. There are several areas in which such "latching up" can be observed.

It will be important, for example, for the central government to continue providing timely and adequate budget support for all provinces, regardless of their political or demographic makeup. The same applies to an equitable sharing of oil revenues.

On the security front, the continued growth of Iraqi security forces manned by representatives of all of Iraq's communities will likewise contribute to furtherance of "bottom up" progress.

Economically, infrastructure investment and enhanced delivery of essential services among all of Iraq's communities will reflect increasing "bottom up" validation that all of these communities have a stake—and a future—in their country.

The work of the National Reconciliation Commission is important and we will continue to encourage it to build on current efforts as well as identifying new means to foster political accommodations.

Finally it will be important for senior ministry officials in Baghdad to continue their outreach to their provincial counterparts.

Question. What impact have these local understandings had upon the national reconciliation efforts?

Answer. The biggest impact of these local understandings has been to improve government effectiveness both in Baghdad and the provinces. Building trust between the center and the provinces helps bridge sectarian divides and sets the stage for accommodation on more difficult issues.

When local conditions improve, as they have in Al Anbar, the relationship between local and national authorities changes. The Iraqi central government must act with local authorities to preserve and build on gains made at the local levels—to provide security, improved services, and infrastructure investment. Local citizens must come together to agree on their development needs and set priorities for discussions with the national authorities, and, in some areas, they are doing so. For example, the GOI has agreed to fund additional projects through Anbar's Provincial Council and Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih represented the GOI at the second Anbar Forum, held in September. It is essential for Prime Minister Maliki's government and for all political leaders to maintain the momentum and demonstrate to Iraq's communities that an effective and responsive political process is at work. This is critically important for national reconciliation.

Question. You said in your written testimony, "There is a budding debate about federalism among Iraq's leaders and, importantly, within the Sunni community. Those living in places like Al Anbar and Salahuddin are beginning to realize how localities having more of a say in daily decisionmaking will empower their communities. No longer is an all-powerful Baghdad seen as the panacea to Iraq's problems. This thinking is nascent, but it is ultimately critical to the evolution of a common vision among Iraq's leaders."

- What can be done to support this process? Do you favor letting this process play out on its own or are there specific political, economic, and diplomatic steps we should take to encourage Iraqis to implement federalism?

Answer. The citizens of predominantly Sunni areas like Al Anbar, Salahuddin, and Diyala—along with their fellow Iraqis throughout the country—are learning how to direct their affairs and develop effective and responsive governance at the local and provincial levels. This is a new experience for them. We are assisting with programs aimed, for example, at developing local governance capacity, promoting civil society, and encouraging economic growth. Iraq's international partners have a role to play in this process, and encouraging their participation is a focus of our diplomacy.

The exact nature of the federal system, and, in particular, how the provinces and regions will relate to the national government, is a matter for the Iraqi people to decide. The debate between proponents of a strong central government and those advocating a more decentralized federal system is a key theme in Iraqi political discourse. This is entirely fitting, as the question goes to the heart of the kind of state and nation Iraqis wish to build. In anticipation of the need to address this issue, the Iraqi Constitution defines how individual provinces can organize together to form single federal regions; it also recognizes the existence of the region of Kurdistan as a federal region. The Council of Representatives has passed implementing legislation that allows provinces to take steps to form additional federal regions after April 2008.

Given the centrality of this question to Iraq's future, we believe it is best to allow the Iraqi Government and people to address it at their own pace and to agree among themselves what kind of compromises might be necessary along the way—as was the case in the early days of our own republic.

Question. What are the factors, in your view, that are contributing to the debate on federalism within the Sunni community?

Answer. Like other political actors in Iraq, the Sunni community has a strong and legitimate interest in the debate over federalism. It is important to note, however, that there are disagreements on this issue within the Sunni community, just as there are within the Shia community and to a lesser extent within the Kurdish community. While the Constitution envisions a federal system, we do not encourage a federal system based on ethnicity or religious sect.

Sunni political parties generally favor a strong central government. For example, many Sunnis living in areas without hydrocarbon resources are keen to ensure that revenues from such resources are equitably shared from the center, whatever regional governments may eventually be established.

Provincial politics also shape the debate. Because of the unfortunate Sunni boycott of the 2005 provincial elections, Sunnis are underrepresented in the provincial councils of four provinces. When fresh elections are held—in 2009 or before—the new councils will be in a position to discuss the issue with a stronger mandate than is now the case.

Question. What role do you see for the international community—and particularly for Iraq's neighbors—both politically and economically in helping Iraqis resolve the debate over federalism?

Answer. The debate over federalism is essentially an internal issue, best discussed by the Iraqi people and their political leadership. The most important contribution neighboring countries can make is to pursue policies that contribute to security and stability in Iraq and to assist the Government of Iraq to provide services to all its citizens.

Neighboring countries should allow the debate over federalism to go forward peacefully and without interference. Under the terms of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1770, which extended and expanded UNAMI's mandate, the United Nations has a role to play in assisting the Government of Iraq, at its request, in advancing inclusive national dialogue and political reconciliation. If called upon, UNAMI would therefore be in a position to consider how best to use its good offices.

RESPONSES OF GEN DAVID PETRAEUS TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY SENATOR JOSEPH BIDEN

Question. What is the Department of Defense's best estimate as to the rate at which Iraqis are being displaced from their homes?

Answer. MNF–I does not specifically track the rate of Iraqis citizens being displaced from their homes, but does rely on our Embassy counterparts to provide us that information through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which serves as the lead for the mission in tracking internal displacement of persons within Iraq. USAID uses the estimated statistical data as provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration. The 16 July 2007 United Nations report (Cluster F report) listed the number of Iraqis who have been displaced from their homes at just above 60,000 individuals per month, but our leaders on the ground believe that rate has slowed considerably in recent months.

Question. How many Iraqis do you estimate have been displaced within Iraq (as internally displaced persons) since February 2006?

Answer. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which serves as the lead for the U.S. mission in tracking internally displaced persons, as well as the Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration and the International Organization for Migration estimate that approximately 1.1 million Iraqis have been internally displaced since February 2006.

Question. How many Iraqis do you estimate have fled outside of Iraq, as refugees, since February 2006?

Answer. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees report of 24 July 2007 highlights approximately 500,000 Iraqis that have fled Iraq and are now registered as refugees since February 2006. Other estimates I have seen run as high as 2 million.

Question. What is the Multi-National Force–Iraq doing to provide assistance to internally displaced persons within Iraq?

Answer. Multi-National Force–Iraq (MNF–I) works closely with our counterparts at the U.S. mission and the United States Agency for International Development

(USAID), which serves as the coalition lead for tracking internally displaced persons within Iraq, to provide assistance to internally displaced persons within Iraq.

On a daily basis, MNF–I subordinate units and Iraqi security force live among the people and patrol the neighborhoods and villages to protect the population from terrorist and extremist threats, they update the U.S. mission on displaced civilians that they encounter, and they provide humanitarian assistance when required. Our recent operations have also enhanced the security, and stability within communities by reducing sectarian and terrorist attacks, thus slowing the rate of displacement and creating the conditions for some, though not many, displaced Iraqis to return to their homes.

Question. To what extent does ethnic cleansing account for the diminution in the level of sectarian violence in Iraq, especially in Baghdad?

Answer. There is no doubt that the population displacement and the segregation of ethnic and sectarian groups that have occurred in Baghdad and throughout Iraq, while tragic, have contributed to the decreased levels of violence in some Baghdad neighborhoods and across Iraq. It is difficult to judge the causal weight of displacement and segregation on the decrease in violence. I believe the improved security situation is in larger part due to a combination of other factors, including the surge of operations that commenced in June, the increased presence of coalition forces and Iraqi security forces among the populace, the increasing capability of Iraqi security forces, and, most significantly, the increasing participation of local tribal leaders and concerned local citizens in providing security and rejecting extremists.

Question. To what extent are Iraq's ethnic and religious minority communities (i.e., Assyrians, Chaldeans, Mandeans, Sabeans, Shabaks, Turkmen, Yazidis) impacted by these population movements?

Answer. MNF–I does not specifically track the displacement of Iraq's ethnic and religious minority communities. We rely on our Embassy counterparts to provide us that information through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which serves as the lead for the U.S. mission in tracking internally displaced persons within Iraq.

USAID indicates that the current breakdown of internally displaced persons in Iraq is as follows: 93 percent Arabs, 4 percent Assyrians, 1 percent Kurds, 1 percent Turkmen, and 1 percent other remaining minorities.

Question. What steps is the Department of Defense taking to ensure the safety of its current and former Iraqi foreign service nationals, and the safety of their families?

Answer. MNF–I ensures Foreign Service nationals who believe they are at risk of violence due to their association with the United States Government have access to the U.S. Mission–Iraq's process, established by the Department of State, by which they can be considered for admission to the United States as refugees or immigrants. (I have personally signed dozens of letters for individuals in this process.) The Department of State has established a direct access program in Jordan that allows direct-hire employees of the U.S. mission in Iraq and interpreters/translators working for the United States Government or United States Government contractors to be considered for resettlement in the United States.

The Embassy has also established a Special Immigrant Visas (SIV) Review Committee and has procedures in place to process SIV applications. The passage of Senate Resolution 1104 amended the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005 by expanding the total number of Special Immigrant Visas (SIV) from 50 to 500 a year for FY07 and FY08. This amendment also broadened the category of eligible applicants to cover Iraqi and Afghan translators and interpreters who are under Chief of Mission (COM) authority. The administration has put forth legislation that, if passed, would allow any Iraqi employee under Chief of Mission authority to be eligible for consideration of an SIV.

Question. How many of its current or former Iraqi Foreign Service nationals does the Department of Defense estimate have been displaced either within Iraq or outside of it?

Answer. MNF–I does not specifically track the displacement of Iraqi Foreign Service nationals. We rely on our Embassy counterparts to provide us that information through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which serves as the lead for the U.S. mission in tracking displaced persons within Iraq.

Question. How many Department of Defense Iraqi Foreign Service nationals have been referred to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for resettle-

ment to the United States and what efforts, if any, has the Embassy made on their behalf?

Answer. MNF–I does not specifically track this number. Both the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and U.S. Embassies in Baghdad and the region refer Iraqi Foreign Service nationals directly to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program for consideration of resettlement in the United States.

Question. On August 14 a series of coordinated attacks devastated Qahtaniya and other nearby Yazidi villages in northern Iraq, killing more than 500 civilians according to some accounts. This atrocity is the worst example of the tremendous stress facing Iraq's ethnic and religious minorities. What is the Multi-National Force–Iraq doing to provide humanitarian assistance for the victims of the August 14 bombings?

Answer. In the wake of the devastating attacks on the Yazidis on August 14, a combination of the Government of Iraq and its provincial and local governments, the Kurdistan Regional Government, the Iraqi Army, nongovernmental organizations, coalition forces, and the Yazidis themselves fulfilled the immediate and short-term relief needs of the Yazidi villages in northern Iraq. The Iraqi leadership in particular responded quickly and effectively to the tragedy and provided immediate support to the Yazidis. The Iraqi Government, with some coalition assistance, provided the following humanitarian support: 3 pallets of medical supplies, 5,600 Halal meals, 50 tents, 500 blankets, and 17,000 liters of water. Additional humanitarian supplies were available, but based on assessments from the Iraqi Government and international aid organizations, they were not needed.

The coalition, through Multi-National Division–North, took on nine reconstruction projects: Five immediate projects (rubble removal, well repairs, and purchase of water trucks) that were completed within days of the attacks; two short-term projects to repair electrical lines; and two long-term road repair projects.

Question. What is the Multi-National Force–Iraq doing to protect Iraq's fragile ethnic and minority groups (such as Yazidis, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Mandeans, Sabeans, Shabaks, Turkmen, etc.) from terrorist and sectarian attacks, ethnic cleansing, physical intimidation, and economic dislocation?

Answer. The protection of all Iraqi citizens is of geat concern to the Government of Iraq and Multi-National Force–Iraq. On a daily basis, coalition forces work with Iraqi security forces to provide security, further increase the capabilities of Iraqi security forces, facilitate reconciliation, and promote nonsectarian behavior. Our forces also work with the U.S. mission and Provisional Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) to promote better Iraqi governance and to meet the basic needs of the population.

Question. Can you provide concrete examples of this "latching up"? Are there indicators we can look to in the months to come on how effective the "latching up" is?

Answer. The concept of "lashing up" ["latching up"] refers to connecting the groundswell of support by local citizens in rejecting extremism to the broader process of Government-led national reconciliation. Across Iraq, tribal leaders and local citizens are expressing a desire to work with coalition and Iraqi security forces to protect their neighborhoods. The vast majority of these tribes and local citizens are Sunnis, many of whom previously did not support the Government of Iraq and the coalition, and some of whom actively fought against us. However, we are now seeing increasing numbers of Shia participating as well.

At the local level, coalition forces are working with these concerned local citizens, often legitimizing them and solidifying their support through the use of security contracts, and Iraqi security forces have also now been directed by the Prime Minister to cooperate with these groups. MNF–I and the Government of Iraq are working to translate this participation into benefits for national reconciliation through two bodies: On the coalition side, the Force Strategic Engagement Cell, and on the Iraqi side, the Implementation and Follow-up Committee for National Reconciliation. These bodies are working together to transfer the security contracts to the Government of Iraq and to absorb volunteers into the Iraqi security forces and other forms of governmental employment. In doing so, the Government of Iraq will solidify local support and also improve local security while tying the local initiatives to the central government.

Question. What impact have these local understandings had upon the national reconciliation effort?

Answer. To date, local security accommodations with former insurgents have been primarily against al-Qaeda–Iraq with coalition force units. By design, these accommodations have been security oriented, vice reconciliation oriented. There is no doubt that "Concerned Local Citizens" have enhanced security for both coalition

forces and Iraqi citizens, but this is not synonymous with reconciliation. The shared rejection of al-Qaeda–Iraq becomes a foundation upon which to build one bridge toward reconciliation. Also, the positive interaction between Sunni tribes and the Government of Iraq on the issue of security is working as a confidence building measure between these two previously mutually reticent parties. These local understandings therefore represent the first steps on that long road—as the Sunni community has begun to demonstrate to the Government of Iraq that they are prepared to reject foreign extremists, the Government has begun to soften its position toward them. However, much work obviously remains to be done.

Question. Is the United States working with Shia tribes in southern Iraq against the Jaysh al-Mahdi?

Answer. Several Shia tribal leaders, especially in the southern belts of Baghdad, are seeking cooperation with MNF–I to combat extremist militia influence. We are now working with them, although not as extensively as we have with the tribal structures in Anbar province and various Sunni areas. It is important to note that we are not working against Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) per se. We recognize the right of mainstream JAM to participate in the political process, and we welcome Moqtada Sadr's call for a cease-fire. We do not recognize the right of extremist JAM members or JAM Special Groups to use violence or commit criminal acts designed to intimidate, displace, or extort money from the local populace. The local populace is also rejecting these tactics, and we are seeing some indicators of growing disaffection with JAM's heavy handed presence in many areas where there is no AQI threat. We will continue to work with concerned local citizens, regardless of their affiliation, to combat extremists.

Question. Is the United States providing assistance to the Badr Organization against the Jaysh al-Mahdi?

Answer. The Badr Corps is an armed militia affiliated with the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) whose historical raison d'être was to oppose Saddam Hussein. As that reason no longer exists, the Badr Corps, while still existing in some places, has, for the most part, dissipated. Many members of the former Badr Corps have, in fact, joined the legitimate forces of Iraq under a CPA program designed to recruit former militia members for the ISF. The remnants of Badr Corps that do exist clash in particular with Jaysh al-Mahdi elements in the southern provinces. To the best of my knowledge, neither the United States nor any element of the coalition is providing assistance to the Badr Organization to confront the Jaysh al-Mahdi, or for any other purpose, though we do meet regularly with leaders of the Supreme Council (as we do with leaders of other parties) and do discuss security issues with them.

Question. How entrenched in the Shia communities is the Jaysh al-Mahdi vis-a-vis al-Qaeda in Iraq in Sunni community?

Answer. Due to its populist themes, its affiliation with Office of the Martyr Sadr (OMS), and its long tradition in Iraq, Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) is deeply entrenched within some Shia communities, However, the rogue elements of JAM, especially its Special Groups and other elements receiving support from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps–Quds Force, are not well-received by the majority of Shias. Recently, Moqtada al-Sadr issued an order backed by a pledge of honor to cease committing violent acts. The Special Groups as well as other criminal elements of JAM are generally defying that order and continuing to conduct violent acts. In response, we are seeing these groups being rejected by many mainstream members of JAM and by a significant portion of the Shia community at large.

Compared to JAM, al-Qaeda in Iraq's roots in the Sunni community are far shallower. Al-Qaeda in Iraq is a foreign-born organization that continues to be led by foreigners, and it espouses an extremist ideology that has no history or tradition in Iraq. Sunni Iraqis have increasingly realized the true nature of al-Qaeda–Iraq. As they do so, they are rejecting it and deciding instead to work with coalition and Iraqi security forces to secure their areas.

RESPONSES OF GEN DAVID PETRAEUS TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY SENATOR RICHARD LUGAR

Question. Can the successes with Sunni tribes be extrapolated to the Shiite dominated south and south-central? If so, who are you reaching out to and promote in the Shia heartland where there is no apparent unity among the Shiite syndicate? Is there any diminution in the rivalry between SIIC and the Sadrist?

Answer. There is no direct parallel between the Sunni "Tribal Awakening" and the Shia south that would allow for the easy extrapolation of that model. The Shia

south is defined more by the struggle for power and economic resources between major Shia groups than by tribal structure. Overlaid on this struggle are competing theologies and political philosophies. The Sunni awakening is more characterized by tribal rejection of foreign-led extremists committing barbaric acts against the Sunni people. That being said, coalition forces and the Government of Iraq remain committed to reaching out to all political, religious, and tribal forces in the south that are willing to help reduce malign external influences and contribute to a stable environment.

There has been little if any reduction in the rivalry between the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) and the Sadrists. Indeed, the two groups remain engaged in a struggle to empower their respective blocs both in the ruling coalition in Baghdad and in the southern provinces, and I believe we can expect an enduring ideological and political rivalry between the two blocs. Recent events, including the late-August incident at Karbala and the assassination of the governors of Muthanna and Qadisiyah, both of whom were ISCI members, are examples of spikes in violence related to that competition, though the conflicts were initiated nearly exclusively by rogue elements of Sadr's Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM). In reaction to the perception that they are losing popular appeal—and to regain internal control of the organization—Moqtada al-Sadr recently declared a "freeze" in JAM operations. This cease-fire is likely an attempt on the part of the Sadrists to regroup and present a more acceptable image of themselves, one free from thuggish violence and Iranian influence. We welcome the freeze and any outreach to the coalition from the Sadrists. Over the next several months, we believe we will gain better indicators of the direction in which Sadr's movement is heading.

Question. Can you describe from your experience how U.S. presence in Iraq and increasing perceptions of U.S. stridency toward Iran—are received in the region? How is this affecting long-range stability and prospects for peace?

Answer. My diplomatic counterpart Ambassador Crocker works closely with the Government of Iraq leaders on these important diplomatic issues, and I respectfully request that regional diplomatic questions be referred to the Department of State and U.S. Central Command. With regards to MNF–I, one of our objectives is to counter the malign influences of Iran in Iraq, and to encourage Iran to contribute positively to a secure and stable Iraq who is at peace with its neighbors. We welcome the positive contributions of Iran to a safe and secure Iraq, and are waiting to see if Iran holds to the pledge its leaders made to Prime Minister Maliki to stop illicit arms flow from Iran into Iraq.

Question. Are the gains you have noted sustainable without continued U.S. involvement, or that of other peacekeeping forces? Do you foresee conditions reaching a level where more international peacekeepers could be employed?

Answer. One goal of the Joint Campaign Plan (JCP) is to develop Iraqi security forces capable of sustaining security for Iraq. The JCP provides for a phased reduction of U.S. capability as we and our Iraqi counterparts move through a "lead" to "partner" to "overwatch" relationship. This process is specifically designed to preserve the security gains achieved to date while allowing the Iraqi security forces to assume growing responsibility as their capabilities and conditions on the ground allow.

International peacekeeping forces could be employed in Iraq at any time during the execution of the Joint Campaign Plan, assuming this meets the desires of the Government of Iraq and the specific conditions on the ground in the area of Iraq in which peacekeepers would be deployed.

The coalition is currently seeking wider participation and will host a coalition conference in late October 2007.

Question. What do you reasonably expect from the new mandate given to UNAMI, and its new special representative?

Answer. Multi-National Force–Iraq and the United States Mission–Iraq welcome UNAMI's efforts to contribute to a stable, secure Iraq, and we look forward to the arrival of the new special representative, Mr. Staffan Di Mistura. As outlined in UNAMI's new mandate, we hope to see increased efforts to strengthen institutions for representative government, promote political dialogue and national reconciliation, expand electoral support, resolve disputed internal borders relating to Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution, and intensify efforts to deliver humanitarian assistance.

Question. Do you have any inclination that there are as many Sunnis waiting us out as we have participating with us?

Answer. My inclination is that the majority of Sunnis have genuinely turned against al-Qaeda–Iraq and toward a longer term political settlement with the Shia majority. Undoubtedly, a sizeable minority remains skeptical of sustainable security and is wary of a coalition withdrawal that could leave them vulnerable again to both al-Qaeda and Shia extremists.

Question. What do you make of recent violence in the north aimed at Yazidis and Kurds?

Answer. In response to increasingly effective security measures in major urban centers, al-Qaeda–Iraq (AQI) has shifted its attacks to isolated, and relatively defenseless, targets. This is part of AQI's continuing efforts to incite ethnosectarian violence in Iraq in general and in the north in particular, while discrediting the Iraqi and coalition efforts to protect the population. Aggressive targeting of AQI by both coalition and Iraqi security forces has resulted in AQI having fewer seasoned and capable operators to attack targets, especially the better protected targets in large urban areas. As a result, we are increasingly seeing them try to attack softer targets, such as checkpoints and isolated villages, as opposed to crowded markets and neighborhoods. Iraqi security forces, who man many of these checkpoints, are generally performing quite well and preventing many attacks from being much worse. Furthermore, coalition and Iraqi forces as well as Special Mission Units endeavor to interdict attacks through continued targeting. Last, the recent sensational attacks that occurred in the north have actually hardened the population against AQI instead of inciting further ethnosectarian violence.

Question. Understanding the NIE's recommendations and your own against near-term mission changes, how integrated and studied are your plans to reduce force levels and change missions as you have spoken of today?

Answer. As we develop plans to adjust force posture or change the mission, Multi-National Force–Iraq will closely coordinate those efforts with the United States Mission–Iraq, coalition members, and our Iraqi partners to ensure we do not lose the gains we have made in these areas of Iraq. Both the NIE and my testimony described the importance of not changing the mission of population security before conditions warrant. The mission of MNF–I, as reiterated by the President in his speech on 13 September, calls for a conditions-based transition to help ensure that gains are not reversed as Iraqis assume the lead in their own security.

Question. Please provide more fidelity to the information provided on chart No. 14, particularly regarding integrated planning for indicated changes in force levels and missions. Describe what you mean by "Overwatch." What would be the impact on regional stability of a redeployment? Would you recommend a buildup elsewhere in the region?

Answer. Multi-National Force–Iraq defines three types of "Overwatch" through which coalition forces will transition security responsibility to the Iraqis:

Tactical Overwatch: Coalition forces (CF) provide a Quick Reaction Force (QRF) and the majority of essential enablers for Iraqi Security Force (ISF) units, which are capable of independently planning and executing Counter Insurgency (COIN) operations within their assigned Area of Operations (AO). Essential enablers include: Mobility support; joint fires; Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) systems and intelligence linkage; air medical evacuation (MEDEVAC); Level II/III medical facilities; long-range command and control communications; and emergency logistics.

Operational Overwatch: CF provide an operational reserve to reinforce ISF Quick Reaction Forces in order to sustain the ISF's ability to independently plan, execute, and sustain COIN operations. CF may also provide specific enablers to assist ISF operations and ensure operational success, such as joint fires, air MEDEVAC, ISR systems and intelligence linkage.

Strategic Overwatch: The ISF provide security for the nation of Iraq as they focus on COIN, Counterterrorism, routine policing, and border security operations. CF position units to deter external threats, support counterterrorism operations, and provide a strategic reserve. CF will provide limited enabler support such as joint fires, ISR systems, and intelligence linkage. The relationship becomes one of security assistance as part of an alliance described in a long-term security agreement.

A redistribution or augmentation of forces within the Central Command area of operations is not within my purview and is a question better addressed to the Commander, U.S. Central Command.

Question. What is the current DOD policy on the tour lengths for DOD reservists and civilians who volunteered to initially staff the new ePRTs?

Answer. The current Department of Defense (DOD) policy is for personnel assigned to the embedded Provincial Reconstruction Teams (ePRTs) to be replaced no later than 10 months after their arrival in theater.

Question. Will DOD support their serving the full year?

Answer. DOD has agreed to allow personnel to serve a 12-month tour provided the following guidelines are followed: Personnel volunteer to serve 12 months; the ePRT team leader and the Director, Office of Provincial Affairs (OPA) within the U.S. mission approve the volunteer's 12-month request; and the volunteer agrees to serve in accordance with the Office of the Secretary of Defense and his or her respective Service Component mobilization policy.

Question. Are you advised of the State Department's plan to train new people and rotate them in?

Answer. Yes. The Department of Defense and Department of State Memorandum of Agreement dated 22 February 2007 asserts that DOD personnel will be replaced by DOD-provided personnel as part of the transition.

Question. How many DOD-hired translators and interpreters have been admitted to the United States under the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program?

Answer. Multi-National Force–Iraq and the United States Mission–Iraq do not have visibility over the Special Immigrant Visa program for Department of Defense-hired translators and interpreters. The Department of Homeland Security screens the applicants and forwards the individual packets to the Department of State office in Amman, Jordan, for processing and granting of visas.

RESPONSES OF AMBASSADOR RYAN CROCKER TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY SENATOR BILL NELSON

Question. In testimony before the committee, you noted that Diyala province would be a more accurate measure of the state of political reconciliation in Iraq than Anbar province, given the former's mixed Sunni, Shiite, and Kurdish population. What is the current state of political reconciliation efforts in Diyala province?

To what extent have al-Qaeda in Iraq activities in Diyala forced out Shiite residents since the 2003 invasion of Iraq?

What are the State Department's current estimates of the ratio of Sunni to Shiite to Kurdish residents in Diyala?

To what extent are any successes in political reconciliation a result of the increasing Sunni homogeneity in Diyala?

Answer. While there is considerable work to be done toward political reconciliation in Diyala, great strides have been made. Many tribal leaders decided in recent months to fight al-Qaeda and work with coalition and Iraqi forces to drive al-Qaeda from the province. Leaders representing 20 of the 25 major tribes in Diyala recently signed agreements to support coalition and Iraqi forces. This agreement, in conjunction with increased coalition force presence and extensive military operations, has resulted in a decline in attacks in Diyala. In addition, Sunni and Shia leaders are beginning to engage one another in Diyala and are holding meetings to promote reconciliation. These efforts show that the success seen in Al Anbar is possible in other provinces with more mixed populations.

There are no figures at the present time that indicate how many Shia have been forced from Diyala as a result of AQI activities. However, Diyala, like many of Iraq's provinces, has a high number of Iraqis displaced both to and from the province. The most recent estimate from the Iraqi Ministry of Displacement & Migration (MODM) states that about 12,000 displaced families are living in Diyala governorate, many of them arriving after the February 2006 Samarra Mosque bombing. Most IDP families currently residing in Diyala come from Baghdad. The State Department's Diyala PRT estimates that most of the IDPs in Diyala are Arabs, approximately 77-percent Sunni and 23-percent Shia. The Diyala PRT also estimates that Diyala's general population is 49 percent Sunni, 36 percent Shia, and 15 percent Kurd.

Diyala remains a mixed population province. Political reconciliation in Diyala stems in large part from the Sunni desire for provincial elections and greater political representation. To that end, Sunni political leaders have been increasingly cooperative with Shia political leaders in the last 2 months. Additionally, Sunni leaders are becoming increasingly visible to the people and are taking the opportunity to govern. Sunni leaders were among the first to participate in Operation Arrowhead Ripper, a comprehensive operation to rid Diyala of extremists and restore public services. Leaders who were previously marginally involved are now active.

RESPONSES OF GEN DAVID PETRAEUS TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY SENATOR BILL NELSON

Question. In your estimation, what total number of U.S. service personnel, including all Brigade Combat Teams, support and other personnel will remain in Iraq at the end of each of March 2008, July 2008, and September 2008?

Answer. Multi-National Force–Iraq is currently in the process of determining what elements, beyond the five Brigade Combat Teams, Marine Expeditionary Unit, and two Marine Battalions, can be withdrawn without replacement as the combat units are drawn down. I am thus hesitant, at this point, to give more than a range of personnel numbers, depending on how much we can reduce the so-called combat enablers—the combat support and combat service support units. Such enablers typically redeploy after the elements they've supported have been drawn down, and some likely will be required to execute base close-out procedures as well.

As I explained to the congressional committees, the redeployment without replacement of surge forces began mid-September with the redeployment of the Marine Expeditionary Unit. This will be followed by the redeployment of five Army Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) and the two surge Marine Battalions that takes place between mid-December and mid-July. By the end of March 2008, two BCTs, the Marine Expeditionary Unit, and two Marine infantry battalions will have redeployed without replacement—a total of about 1,000 troops. It is not yet clear how many additional enabler elements will have been withdrawn; that is what we're working on now.

By mid-July 2008, the U.S. military footprint will again represent a 15 BCT set; however, some of those BCTs (the Stryker Brigades and the Armored Cavalry Regiment) are larger than other BCTs. Again, combat service, and combat service support enablers support overall missions in theater, and we are currently reviewing which enabler units can also be withdrawn. Some of these enablers have unique capabilities and will have to be retained—such as Task Force 134's military police units that conduct detainee operations, certain new counter-IED elements, and some intelligence assets—and they will not be affected by the reductions in BCTs; in fact, we will have to keep more of those than we had when the surge began, as the detainee population has grown. We also need to retain a division-like headquarters for the Multi-National Division-Center mission and some of the aviation assets that we have had during the surge. These factors, and the still-to-be-determined pace of the reduction of enablers, make it difficult to predict precisely what the U.S. military footprint will be, though we are working the issue now and want to reduce whatever we can.

Having said all that, the drawdown of the singe BCTs and Marine units will leave us with between 130,000 and 140,000 U.S. personnel in Iraq by the summer of 2008. Rest assured that we are going to try get as low as we can, but we need to ensure that we do not reduce enablers so far and so fast that they leave our forces without the support they need.

Finally, with respect to beyond July 2008, I cannot currently predict the range of possible personnel strengths. As I told the congressional committees, force reductions will continue beyond the presurge levels of brigade combat teams that we will reach by mid-July 2008. However, as I also stated, it would be premature to predict the pace of further reductions at this juncture, so far out. No later than March 2008, I will make recommendations to my chain of command regarding further coalition force reductions and mission adjustments for the period beyond July 2008.

RESPONSES OF GEN DAVID PETRAEUS TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY SENATOR ROBERT P. CASEY

Question. Can you explain why the Department of Defense appears to be arbitrarily changing its definitions of what qualifies as sectarian violence and why it is reclassifying previous accounts of the levels of sectarian violence in 2006?

Answer. The definition and methodology we use to determine if violent acts should be classified as ethnosectarian have not changed since July 2005. MNF–I defines ethnosectarian violence as "an event and any associated civilian deaths caused by or during murder/executions, kidnappings, direct fire, indirect fire, and all types of explosive devices identified as being conducted by one ethnic/religious person/group directed at a different ethnic/religious person/group, where the primary motivation for the event is based on ethnicity or religious sect." I have attached to this response the full MNF–I document from which this definition comes.

The only significant change to the reported level of ethnosectarian violence is one that resulted from our receipt of backlogged data from the Iraqi National Command

Center in March 2007. After verifying the data, we updated previous accounts of the levels of sectarian violence with these reports to ensure we had the most accurate depiction of the sectarian violence we are measuring. This additional data did not arrive in time for inclusion in the March 9010 Report to Congress, but was reflected in the June 2007 9010 Report. Since then, MNF–I has worked hard to improve our coordination with our Iraqi counterparts to ensure we receive Iraqi reports in a timely and consistent manner. We believe that using verified Iraqi data adds to the accuracy of our statistics.

Question. What is the current methodology used by the Pentagon in defining sectarian violence—how do we classify a death as stemming from sectarian origins? In calculating sectarian violence, which of the following cases are included?

- Attacks perpetrated by Iraqi security forces and police?
- Car bombings and other large suicide attacks?
- Intrasectarian violence, both Shia-on-Shia and Sunni-on-Sunni?

If any of these factors are not included, please explain the basis for exclusion.

Answer. MNF–I's definition of sectarian violence is provided in the answer to question one above. To determine whether a particular event should be included as ethnosectarian violence, analysts review each event, focusing on the ethnicity and/or religious sect of the victim(s), the entity being attacked, the demographics of the area where the attack occurred, and the method of attack.

In regards to the specific cases mentioned above, attacks perpetrated by Iraqi security forces and police, as well as car bombings and other large suicide attacks, are classified as ethnosectarian if they meet the criteria outlined in MNF–I's definition of ethnosectarian violence. Intrasectarian violence such as Shia-on-Shia or Sunni-on-Sunni is not considered as ethnosectarian violence, but is included in overall statistics and trends data regarding violence, such as overall civilian deaths.

Question. What is the most accurate metric for measuring the levels of violence in Iraq? How can the U.S. best determine whether the situation is becoming more or less stable? How do we best determine whether an incident is a "sectarian" incident or not?

Answer. There is no single metric that can fully measure the levels of violence in Iraq and identify if Iraq is becoming more or less stable. In fact, Multi-National Force–Iraq (MNF–I) uses a variety of different indicators to assess Iraq's levels of violence and its stability. I showed the committees several of those different statistical assessments during my testimony.

The primary metrics MNF–I uses to measure violence and determine levels of stability include the detailed analysis of the number of casualties and number and types of attacks initiated against coalition forces, Iraqi authorities, Iraqi security forces, Iraqi nationals, and key infrastructure. Due to the particular nature of violence in Iraq, MNF–I also focuses closely on levels of ethnosectarian violence, and the definition used to classify incidents as sectarian is noted above in the answer to question one.

Question. As the Commander of the Multinational Force–Iraq, you are responsible for achieving sustainable success in the Iraq theater; accordingly, your recommendations on the future course of the U.S. mission there will be made on that basis alone. Chairman Pace, Admiral Fallon, and other senior military officers are responsible for assessment of the worldwide U.S. military presence and thus are asked to judge risks outside of Iraq, including prioritizing the deployment of relative U.S. troop levels around the world.

General Petraeus, does your testimony today reflect your personal assessment or does it reflect the consensus view of the uniformed military leadership?

Answer. My testimony reflects my personal assessment as the Commander of Multi-National Force–Iraq, not the consensus view of the uniformed military leadership. As I stated in my testimony, I briefed my assessment and the recommendations for the way forward to my chain of command prior to my appearance before Congress. However, I wrote my opening statement myself and did not clear it with anyone in the Pentagon, the White House, or Congress. During my testimony, when answering questions from the various committees, I provided my own assessment and did not attempt to provide a consensus view of the uniformed military leadership.

That being said, a consensus does exist among the operational commander in Iraq, LTG Ray Odierno; myself; ADM William Fallon, my immediate superior and the Commander of U.S. Central Command; and the Joint Chiefs of Staff regarding the mission in Iraq; the drawdown of the five surge BCTs, the two Marine battalions, and the Marine Expeditionary Unit that has just departed Anbar province; and

the need to make recommendations in March 2008 that deal with force posture beyond the surge drawdown we have already begun.

Question. In making your recommendations for a continuation of the U.S. military surge into next spring and summer, to what extent did you take into consideration the readiness of U.S. military to respond to challenges outside of Iraq?

Answer. Strictly speaking, as the Commander of Multi-National Force–Iraq, I am responsible for identifying the requirements to achieve our Nation's strategic objectives in Iraq. How those requirements are met is the responsibility of the force providers—the various Service Chiefs in coordination with Joint Forces Command and the Joint Staff. As such, my recommendation on accelerating the redeployment of the surge brigades was based principally on my assessment that the military objectives of the surge are in large measure being met by the combined efforts of the coalition and Iraqi security forces and that our effort can be sustained with a reduced level of forces. Still, while the readiness of the U.S. military did not drive my recommendations, it did inform them. As a senior military officer, I am well aware of the strain on the U.S. Armed Forces, particularly on the ground components, caused, among other reasons, by the war in Iraq.

Question. Is it not fair to say that, in developing your assessment of recommended troop levels in Iraq, you are focused exclusively on the situation in Iraq and are not expected to assess the impact of an extended troop surge on our other national security interests? Or, for that matter, the impact of a continued surge on sustaining the basic readiness of the U.S. Army?

Answer. I would be remiss in my broader duties as a senior military officer if I did not consider the impact of my decisions and recommendations on our Nation's other national security interests. Furthermore, what happens in Iraq has broad implications for America's national security interests, which include stability in the Middle East and denying safe havens for terrorists. My broader duties also could be construed to include assessing the basic readiness of the U.S. Army, which is one of our Nation's most significant means of protecting all our national security interests. However, my specific responsibility is to provide recommendations for what is required to achieve our Nation's strategic objectives in Iraq, not in other parts of the world. Therefore, these other considerations informed, but did not drive, my recommendations.

Question. Would you agree that, as the President and the Congress determine the next steps on our mission in Iraq, we should keep in mind that you can only comment on the situation in Iraq and should not be expected to assess our critical national interests that lie elsewhere?

Answer. My responsibility as the Commander of Multi-National Force–Iraq is to provide recommendations on requirements for achieving our Nation's strategic objectives in Iraq, However, the situation in Iraq has a direct nexus with America's national security interests in other places around the world. Among the consequences of failure in Iraq is the establishment of a terrorist safe haven, which would have broad implications for the security of the U.S. and its allies; regional instability fueled by a failed Iraqi state; and the strengthening of Iran, which is a state sponsor of terrorism and is also pursuing nuclear weapons. Such developments could adversely affect global energy flows and thus the U.S. and global economies. Beyond that, an even greater humanitarian crisis in Iraq could have implications beyond Iraq as well. In noting those points, I do take national security interests that lie outside Iraq into my considerations. Still, any primary focus is on Iraq.

Question. The Wall Street Journal reported yesterday that the Pentagon is preparing to build a base for U.S. forces near the Iraqi-Iranian border in order to interdict the flow of Iranian arms and explosives to allied Shiite militant groups in Iraq. According to the news report, the new base is designed to accommodate at least 200 soldiers and is likely to open in November. Along with this base, the U.S. military is planning new fortified checkpoints on the major highways leading from the Iranian border to Baghdad and the installation of x-ray machines and explosive-detecting sensors at the primary border crossing between the two nations.

Can you verify whether this news report is accurate? Is the United States planning to build a new military base near the Iraqi-Iranian border to help interdict the flow of weapons and explosives from Iran to Shiite militias inside Iraq?

Answer. As part of our overarching strategy to improve Iraq's Department of Boarder Enforcement (DBE) and Ports of Entry (POE), MNF–I is building a coalition combat outpost (COP) approximately 10 kilometers from the Zurbatiyah Port of Entry, located on Iraq's border with Iran in Wasit province.

MNF–I has multiple Border Transition Teams (BTTs), whose mission is to teach, coach, and mentor DBE and customs personnel who operate out of Iraq's 19 POEs and Iraq's austere bases located along the border. As Iraq's POEs are often remote, the optimal way for BTTs to perform their mission is by living in close proximity to their Iraqi counterparts in COPs. Currently four such COPs exist, each located near its respective Iraqi POE, along Iraq's border with both Syria and Jordan. COP Badra, the COP being built near the Zurbatiyah POE, will be the first COP near the Iranian border.

When complete, COP Badra, like the 4 existing COPs, will provide BTTs with secure housing, equipment storage, and life support facilities. BTT members will no longer have to travel 2 hours each way to reach their partnered unit; instead, they will live in a COP that adjoins the existing Iraqi base that houses Iraqi border personnel and their headquarters. This arrangement will enhance the BTT members' ability to perform their mission and it will reduce their risks, as they will have to spend far less time on the road.

Additionally, as part of the Border Strategy, there are plans to build improved checkpoints on major highways in Wasit province. These checkpoints will be manned by forces from the Republic of Georgia and will improve rapport, build relationships, and leverage local Iraqi leadership to increase overall border security and interdict weapons and illegal goods moving across the border.

In the article in question, The Wall Street Journal implies that new equipment is scheduled to be fielded at border crossing points. That is true. However, this equipment is also part of planned enhancements to Iraq's ports of entry, much of the scheduled new equipment is not yet in use because of the length of time it takes to procure, install, and put into operation new technologies in austere locations. However, some equipment is already in place and functioning. For example, Iraqi Border Security and Customs agents, with BTT overwatch, already employ both x-ray and explosive detection equipment at many of the POEs. Future equipment upgrades may occur at the discretion of the Government of Iraq and will depend on the availability of new countersmuggling technology.

Question. What other steps should the United States take to help crack down on Iranian supply flows to Shiite extremist militia groups?

Answer. In addition to a comprehensive border strategy that seeks to disrupt and interdict the flow of Iranian supplied munitions, MNF–I and the Embassy are undertaking several other initiatives designed to disrupt Iranian supply flows to Shiite extremist militia groups. First, the MNF–I continues to target Shia extremist groups and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps–Quds Force officers—both those responsible for attacks against coalition forces and those who provide lethal aid to such groups. Second, MNF–I coordinates with the Interagency, particularly the Treasury Department, to disrupt and freeze facilitator funding in accordance with Executive orders. Used properly, these tools allow us to affect not only individuals and organizations but also companies that support the spread of Iranian lethal weapons flows. Third, MNF–I continues to engage with and provide intelligence information to key leaders of the Government of Iraq who are becoming more vocal, both publicly and privately, in demanding the end of Iranian attempts to destabilize their country. Coupled with U.S. and international efforts to highlight malign Iranian influence to the wider international community, the increasing demands of Iraqi leaders may help provide the necessary diplomatic pressure to persuade Iran from supporting nefarious actions within Iraq—and may help make future diplomatic efforts with Iran more productive than those in the past. Finally, MNF–I is engaging the tribes along the Iraq-Iran border in an effort to seek their assistance in disrupting illegal traffic. These engagements, as well as technological improvement at border points of entry, such as biometrics and search and surveillance equipment, will enhance the ability to disrupt the flow of Iranian-provided munitions into Iraq.

Question. To what degree is the increased stability in Iraq the result of population displacements and sectarian cleansing?

Answer. Population displacement and segregation of ethnic and sectarian groups have occurred to varying degrees in Baghdad and throughout Iraq, and these demographic changes have contributed to increased stability in some Baghdad neighborhoods and to a lesser degree in the rest of Iraq. However, the improved security situation in Baghdad and across Iraq is in larger part the result of other factors, including additional coalition and Iraqi security forces, the increased presence of coalition forces and Iraqi security forces among the populace, the increasing capability of Iraqi Security Forces, and, most significantly, the increasing participation of local tribal leaders and local citizens in providing security and rejecting extremists.

Question. If so, what does that tell us about the likelihood for national political reconciliation in Iraq—if the stability we appear to be acquiring in some parts of Iraq is achieved on the basis of the sectarian groups segregating from one another?

Answer. The goal of the improved security situation in Iraq is to provide Iraqi leaders the time and space to deal with the difficult issues that must be resolved for national political reconciliation to occur. When violence spiraled out of control in the wake of the February 2006 bombing of the Al Askari Mosque in Samarra, Iraqi leaders did not have the time to focus on issues like de-Baathification reform, provincial powers, and the equitable distribution of hydrocarbon revenues; their energies were focused on helping contain the violence. Now that violence levels are decreasing, Iraq's leaders are able to focus their energies more on the issues that we all agree must be resolved in order to achieve lasting national political reconciliation.

Question. General Petraeus, I want to walk through the final slide that you presented to the committee in your opening statement. This slide is titled "Recommended Force Reductions/Mission Shift" and is arguably the most important slide of your presentation. The slide portrays the eventual shift in the mission of U.S. forces in Iraq, from leading combat operations to a supporting role, backing up Iraqi security forces as they take the lead in defending their nation. The slide demonstrates the eventual reduction of U.S. troop levels to the presurge levels of 15 U.S. Army brigades by the summer of 2008, returning us to ~130,000 troops. Of course, these reductions are more or less a matter of necessity—everyone recognizes that the surge levels the U.S. Army is currently at in Iraq cannot continue indefinitely because we have no more Army troops in reserve.

The remainder of the slide, however, is very vague. It demonstrates an eventual reduction of U.S. Amy brigades to 12 brigades, then 10, then 7, and finally an end-state of five U.S. Army brigades in Iraq. The mission of these end-state five brigades would be to engage in "strategic overwatch," as you define it.

Please outline the key assumptions you have made that would allow for such a drawdown of U.S. military forces. To what degree does it rely upon capable Iraqi security forces able to act independently on the battlefield? What level of national political reconciliation is required to enable such U.S. troop reductions?

Answer. This chart is based, fundamentally, on the assumption that the drawdown of U.S. military forces beyond what I have already recommended will be primarily conditions-based. It is also based on the assumption that coalition and Iraqi security forces will continue to make improvements to the security situation, that local political situations will evolve in a positive manner, and that the capabilities of Iraqi security forces to maintain security will continue to increase. As these two conditions are met, additional coalition forces can be withdrawn without sacrificing the gains we have fought to achieve. Iraqi security forces will continue to maintain the gains as they provide security for their fellow citizens.

U.S. troop reductions are not predicated on national political reconciliation; they are predicated on the ability of coalition and Iraqi forces to maintain a level of security that enables national—and local—political reconciliation. However, as I described in the previous answer, a symbiotic relationship exists between security and reconciliation: As security improves, reconciliation can occur; as reconciliation occurs, security can further improve. Local and national political accommodations also are somewhat symbiotic: As local reconciliation takes root, national reconciliation initiatives can begin to bear fruit.

Question. You have not placed any specific dates on the "Y axis" of this chart beyond July 2008, instead asserting that any further reductions beyond the 130,000 troops will be "conditions-based." Please outline those specific conditions that will allow the U.S. to further reduce its military presence in Iraq.

Answer. The specific conditions that will allow the U.S. to further reduce its military presence in Iraq beyond the reductions I have already recommended are continuing improvements in the security situation—including continued degradation of enemy forces—and continuing increases in the capability and capacity of the Iraqi security forces. Building a sustainable security environment should facilitate national and local reconciliation and economic progress, which in turn will have positive effects on the ability to maintain sustainable security, which will then enable further reductions to take place.

Question. Why do you believe five U.S. Army brigades are required in Iraq for the long-term? Do you believe that the United States will need to maintain a permanent military presence in Iraq—over the next decade and beyond? Does that mean the United States will be constructing permanent military bases?

Answer. As I said in my testimony, it will probably be spring of next year before I have an adequate appreciation for further reductions and mission adjustments beyond the summer of 2008. I do believe, however, that the U.S. will need to maintain significant forces—perhaps between five and seven brigades, as shown in the slide—in Iraq for some time, although I cannot say for certain how many brigades and for how many years. The slide, in that sense, is illustrative, not precisely predictive. Iraqi security forces—both police and military—will, over time, be able to independently perform the internal security mission while U.S. forces provide strategic overwatch and contribute certain counterterrorism capabilities. I do not believe this equates to a permanent military presence. Moreover, the U.S. is not constructing permanent military bases, but will continue to utilize temporary bases that support our operations and provide an acceptable level of life support for our deployed forces.

Question. An Associated Press article published today described the results of a recent poll of Iraqis on the impact of the U.S. military surge in Iraq. The key findings of the poll include:

- Forty-seven percent want American forces and their coalition allies to leave the country. Immediately, the survey showed, 12 points more than said so in a March poll as the troop increase was beginning. And 57 percent—including nearly all Sunnis and half of Shiites—said they consider attacks on coalition forces acceptable, a slight increase over the past half year.
- Seventy percent in the survey said they believe security has worsened where the added forces were sent, with another 11 percent saying the buildup has had no effect.

How can you portray the surge as making measurable gains in security throughout Iraq when a clear majority of the very recipients of that purported progress in security, the Iraqi people, are telling us that they do not believe the security situation has improved and has, in fact, deteriorated?

Answer. Iraq's political leaders—although they are still developing a sense of responsibility to their constituents—have all communicated their sensing that there has been an improvement in security over the course of the surge, but much more work is required to provide for the basic needs of their citizens. They acknowledge that security progress has been uneven, but have also been very clear in crediting Multi-National Force–Iraq with much of that improvement. Their request for a long-term security relationship with the United States is further evidence of their support for coalition forces and their acknowledgement of the positive impact of the coalition on security in their country.

[Attachment follows:]

MNF–I Ethno-Sectarian Violence Methodology

Definition of Ethno-Sectarian Violence. An event and any associated civilian deaths caused by or during murders/executions, kidnappings, direct fire, indirect fire, and all types of explosive devices identified as being conducted by one ethnic/religious person/group directed at a different ethnic/religious person/group, where the primary motivation for the event is based on ethnicity or religious sect.

Procedure for Determining Ethno-Sectarian Violence. MNF–I gathers data from Coalition and Iraqi operations centers as events are reported. In the days after incidents take place, MNF–I continues to refine the data, verifying and updating initial information, adding pertinent details, and analyzing the events. In this way, the first report is supplemented by follow-up reporting to ensure that we have the most accurate information possible. Analysts then review the Coalition reports and a subset of the Iraqi reports (murders, high profile attacks, assassinations, and kidnappings), using the criteria listed below, in order to determine the ethnicity and/or religious sect of the victim(s), the entity being attacked, the demographics of the area where the attack occurred, and the method of attack. These criteria allow the analysts to determine whether or not a particular event should be considered ethno-sectarian violence.

The following criteria are used by MNF–I to determine Ethno-Sectarian Violence

Ethnicity or Religious Sect of the victim. Each event is reviewed to determine the ethnicity and religious sect of the victim. When a victim is identified to have been one ethnicity/sect and was killed in an area predominantly populated by a different ethnicity/sect or is known to have been killed by a different ethnicity/sect, the event is considered an ethno-sectarian incident.

Entity. Each event is reviewed to determine if the attack occurred against civilians, civilians of the same sect or ethnicity, Coalition Forces, Iraqi Security Forces, or the Government of Iraq. Attacks against civilians of the same sect or ethnicity, Coalition Forces, Government of Iraq personnel/facilities, and Iraqi Security Forces are not considered ethno-sectarian incidents.

Area. Each event is reviewed to determine the area in which the attack took place. Attacks targeting predominantly single-sect or single-ethnicity areas are typically considered ethno-sectarian. "Predominantly" is defined as greater than or equal to 50% of one ethnic/religious affiliation.

Target. Each event is reviewed to determine the intended target(s) of the attack. The targets of an attack, such as crowds or specific types of infrastructure, provide indicators of whether or not an attack was conducted for ethno-sectarian reasons. Medical centers, market places, mosques or religious symbols, educational facilities, religious gatherings, stores/restaurants, and housing areas are some common areas where ethno-sectarian attacks occur. These entities are normally run/owned, attended by, or used primarily by one ethnic/religious group. There are cases where the attacking sect may kill or injure individuals from his same ethnic/religious group during an attack; however, this alone does not prevent an attack from ethno-sectarian, extremist ideology permits the killing of any Muslim who is not a member of the targeted group and is located among the targeted group, since doing so classifies them as apostates.

Method of Attack. Each event is reviewed to determine the type of attack that has occurred. The method of attack is a solid indicator of whether an attack is ethno-sectarian or not.

Example: High-profile attacks, such as suicide car bombs, car bombs and suicide vests, are known Sunni-extremist group tactics often directed against civilians, Coalition Forces, Iraqi Security Forces, and the Government of Iraq. For example, a high-profile attack occurring in a predominantly Shia area points is often considered an ethno-sectarian attack.

The following explains methods of attack in more detail as well as the source of the reporting for the attack

Improvised Explosive Device (IED): Locations that are primarily targeted by IEDs include, but are not limited to, medical centers, market places, mosques or religious symbols, educational facilities, religious gatherings, stores/restaurants, and houses in neighborhoods. These entities are normally run/owned, attended by, or used primarily by one ethnic/religious group. Coalition reports (SIGACTS) are used for this category of attacks.

Example: Threats are made to Sunni individuals living in a predominantly Shia area, telling them to leave or face the consequences. Following the threat, the homes of two Sunni families in the neighborhood are destroyed by an IED. This is considered an ethno-sectarian incident.

Car Bombs: Locations that are primarily targeted by car bombs include, but are not limited to, medical centers, market places, mosques or religious symbols, educational facilities, religious gatherings, stores/restaurants, and houses in neighborhoods. These entities are normally run/owned, attended by, or used primarily by one ethnic/religious group. Coalition reports (SIGACTS) are used for this category of attacks.

Suicide Car Bombs: Locations that are primarily targeted by suicide car bombs include, but are not limited to, medical centers, market places, mosques or religious symbols, educational facilities, religious gatherings, stores/restaurants, and houses in neighborhoods. These entities are normally run/owned, attended by, or used primarily by one ethnic/religious group. Coalition reports (SIGACTS) are used for this category of attacks.

Suicide Vest: Locations that are primarily targeted by suicide vest attacks include, but are not limited to, medical centers, market places, mosques or religious symbols, educational facilities, religious gatherings, stores/restaurants, and houses in neighborhoods. These entities are normally run/owned, attended by, or used primarily by one ethnic/religious group. Coalition reports (SIGACTS) are used for this category of attacks.

Example: A suicide vest explodes in a crowded market located in a mixed neighborhood but mainly frequented by Shia. Although the attack was in a mixed neighborhood, the assessed target is Shia civilians. This assessment was derived from the fact that the predominant population using the market was Shia. Some Sunnis may have also been killed or injured in the event; however, extremist ideology permits the killing of any Muslim who is frequenting an area used by a different sect, since they are considered apostates. This suicide vest attack is considered an ethno-sectarian incident.

Direct Fire: Direct fire often targets religious gatherings, such as individuals entering and exiting mosques; individuals entering and exiting educational facilities; and individuals entering and exiting medical centers, market areas, and gatherings for work. Coalition reports (SIGACTS) are used for this category of attacks.

Example: Individual day laborers of the same sect or ethnicity gather while waiting for work and are killed by direct fire that is shot by individuals of a different sect or ethnicity,

Indirect Fire (IDF): Indirect fire often targets medical centers, market places, mosques or religious symbols, educational facilities, religious gatherings, stores/restaurants, and houses in neighborhoods. It also often targets Coalition Forces, Iraqi Security Forces, and Government of Iraq facilities and personnel. Due to the inaccuracy of IDF, it must be assessed as being directed against civilians of a specific sect/ethnicity, and there must not be any Coalition Forces, Iraqi Security Forces, or Government of Iraq facilities or personnel in the area; if they are, it cannot be construed that they were not the intended target. Coalition reports (SIGACTS) are used for this category.

Executions: Executions include civilians that show signs of torture. This includes evidence of individuals being bound, blindfolded, or shot anywhere in the head or decapitated, strangled, hung, suffocated, or mutilated as well as instances where three or more bodies are found together (except in cases of indirect fire). Executions against Iraqi Security Forces or any other government personnel are excluded. Also excluded are executions conducted due to intra-sect violence. For this category of attack, Coalition reports (SIGACTS) are supplemented by Host Nation reports, since those reports have the best information available from morgues and police stations.

Murder: Murders can be categorized as ethno-sectarian violence if it is determined that the perpetrator is of one ethnicity/religious group and the victim is of a different ethnic/religious group. Coalition reporting and Host Nation reporting are both used for this category of attack.

Kidnapping: Kidnapping events are considered ethno-sectarian incidents if they involve individuals who are kidnapped solely because of their ethnicity or religion. Coalition reporting and Host Nation reporting are used for this category.

RESPONSES OF AMBASSADOR RYAN CROCKER TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY SENATOR GEORGE V. VOINOVICH

Question. Is our Government doing any integrated planning for a potential drawdown or change in mission focus (which some might refer to as an exit strategy)? If so, what kind of missions would we continue to perform in the long term, if we reduced forces to a minimal presence?

Answer. There will be adjustments to our strategy in the coming months. General Petraeus has recommended to the President, and the President has accepted, that beginning in December 2007, we can transition to the next phase of our strategy. During this phase, U.S. forces will gradually transition from surge operations and transfer responsibility for population security to Iraqi forces. Adjustments in the missions of U.S. forces and transitions to Iraqi forces will vary based on local conditions.

We have begun to develop with our Iraqi partners the framework for a long-term security relationship between Iraq and the U.S. that will encompass significant security, economic, and diplomatic ties with a reduced U.S. military presence as soon as conditions allow.

The President has directed General Petraeus and me to update our joint campaign plan and to adjust military and civilian resources in accordance with that updated plan.

Iraq's problems require a long-term effort. There are no easy answers or quick solutions. Every strategy requires constant recalibration, and a balanced focus on both population security and transition will be necessary. The best way to secure our national interests and avoid an unfavorable outcome in Iraq is to continue to focus our operations on securing the Iraqi people while targeting terrorist groups and militia extremists and, as quickly as they are ready, transitioning security tasks to Iraqi elements.

Question. What motivates Sunni tribal leaders to cooperate with the United States? What role do they see for themselves in the future of Iraq? Do you believe it is possible that U.S. support for Sunni Arab militia groups will undermine Sunni-Shiite reconciliation efforts?

Answer. Years of intimidating activities by al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)—including the targeting of Sunni tribal leaders—and the realization that AQI was not representing

the interests of Sunnis in Iraq have led many tribal leaders to begin cooperating with coalition forces in Al Anbar province. Together, local sheikhs, Iraqi security forces, and coalition troops drove the terrorists from the provincial capital of Ramadi and other population centers. Even after the murder of Sheikh Abdul Sattar abu-Risha, one of the tribal leaders who opposed AQI, Ramadi is still safer than it was just 1 year ago. Businesses continue to open, and the situation is slowly returning to normal.

During his September 3 visit to Al Anbar province, Sunni tribal leaders told President Bush that they now see a place for their people in a democratic Iraq. These leaders want to play a role in national politics because they want to improve the living conditions of their people. We expect them to continue to be influential in the areas from which they come and to continue to work together to advance reconciliation.

The United States does not support the creation of militias, neither Shia nor Sunni. Instead, we have encouraged young Sunnis who once would have joined the insurgency to join the Iraqi Army and police, and they have increasingly done so.

Question. How will the U.S. military forces handle the instability in the Shia-dominated south where several militias are vying for power? Can the Sunni Awakening lessons be applied there as well? Are there moderate forces that can work with U.S. forces?

Answer. There are indications some influential tribal leaders in the Shia heartland are determined to counter militia and Iranian influence and bring stability to their areas. The political and security dynamics in the Shia areas are different from those in Al Anbar, but the determination is there. The Shia have seen in Al Anbar that groups of concerned local citizens can effectively take back their communities from extremists.

Just as al-Qaeda's brutality and criminality alienated the population of Al Anbar province, the recent attacks by the Jaysh al-Mahdi on worshippers in Karbala provoked a strong backlash among moderate Shia. This backlash led Moqtada al-Sadr to call for a suspension of JAM activity.

These developments offer opportunities for the Government of Iraq to expand its support for tribal movements in the south and south-central areas of Iraq, and we are encouraging the GOI to do so. Nevertheless, intra-Shia violence in the south remains a major concern.

Question. Do regional states understand that the worse Iraq becomes, the worse it becomes for them? How are they contributing to Iraq's stability? Do they meet regularly? What is the best forum or diplomatic tool for bringing the right players together to discuss the future of Iraq? For example, was the forum in Sharm el-Sheikh useful? Do you expect the Istanbul regional ministerial meeting to make a difference on these issues? Do you expect much from the new mandate for the U.N. assistance mission (UNAMI) and its new special representative? Can the U.N. act as a leader in coordinating outside help and making a significant difference in Iraq?

Answer. Based on discussions with regional interlocutors and public statements emanating from regional states, we have no doubt that more of Iraq's neighbors understand that stabilizing Iraq is crucial to regional security. Neighbors such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia are well aware of the dangers a worsening security situation in Iraq presents to them, for they have suffered from al-Qaeda attacks in the past. Moreover, Iraq's neighbors are worried about the humanitarian consequences of a failed Iraq which would exacerbate the Iraqi refugee problem.

Even countries that have been unhelpful with regard to the security situation in Iraq, such as Syria and Iran, claim to understand what is at stake. President Asad said in an interview that he is worried about the security threat that transiting foreign fighters could pose inside of Syria. The Iranians have said publicly and during U.S.-Iran meetings in Baghdad that they support a stable Iraq. However, both Iran and Syria seem to have concluded that, in the near term at least, a destabilized Iraq gives them leverage and is in their interests. Regional forums are an essential lever for pressing Iran and Syria to take action for stability in Iraq that is in line with their public statements.

The Iraqis regularly meet with their neighbors, and there are several regional and international initiatives in motion.

- An Iraqi delegation headed by Iraqi National Security Advisor Rubaie went to Jordan in August to improve security coordination and intelligence sharing.
- PM Maliki went to Damascus, Ankara, and Tehran in August and signed security and economic memoranda of understanding with both Syria and Turkey.
- The Government of Saudi Arabia sent a delegation to Baghdad in August to explore potential sites for a new embassy.

- French FM Kouchner visited Iraq in August and Swedish FM Bildt visited in September. Both have welcomed expanded U.N. involvement in Iraq and have said they will work to increase EU financial, technical, and diplomatic activity in Iraq.
- The September 22 High Level Ministerial on Iraq was cohosted by U.N. Secretary General Ban and PM Maliki at the U.N.
- The early November Expanded Neighbors Ministerial, a follow-on to the first Expanded Neighbors Ministerial held in Sharm el-Sheikh in May, will be hosted by the Government of Turkey and chaired by PM Maliki.
- The International Compact with Iraq, an initiative cochaired by the United Nations and Iraq, provides an ongoing mechanism for the international community to support and assist Iraq as it works to build a stable and prosperous nation and a self-sustaining economy.

The first Expanded Neighbors Ministerial, held in Sharm el-Sheikh on May 5, was, indeed, useful. Three regional working groups (energy, refugees, border security) were created at this conference, and the three groups had their inaugural meetings in June and July. Follow-up action has been agreed upon in the form of a technical, expert-level meeting, tentatively set to take place in Kuwait prior to the Border Security Working Group Interior Ministers meeting scheduled for October 23 in Kuwait. Evaluation of progress in the working groups will be a main element of the upcoming Expanded Neighbors Ministerial in Istanbul.

The new UNAMI mandate will increase U.N. activity in Iraq. Specifically it allows UNAMI to work with the government and people of Iraq in advancing political dialogue and national reconciliation, including through constitutional review, the development of processes to resolve disputed internal boundaries, and in planning, funding and implementing reintegration programs for former members of illegal armed groups. We also look to UNAMI to take a leading role in assisting the Iraqi Government in facilitating regional dialogue, including coordination on the neighbors process. UNAMI will also be able to support the Government of Iraq in the coordination of delivery of humanitarian assistance and the safe, orderly, and voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons.

Steffan de Mistura, the new Special Representative of the Secretary General, is a veteran international civil servant and Iraq hand. We have every confidence in his ability to move UNAMI forward under its new mandate, and look forward to hearing his ideas and plans.

Question. Are the players in the region ready for a U.S. withdrawal, if it happens? What have you done to get Iraq's neighbors to build political reconciliation in Iraq and prepare for a pending withdrawal of U.S. forces? Will they be willing to step in and contribute significantly if they know that we plan to stay there for the foreseeable future?

Answer. A premature drawdown of our forces would have devastating consequences. This could include a marked increase in violence, further ethnosectarian 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.

Both the Government of Iraq and U.S. officials continue to engage Iraq's neighbors to emphasize the importance of reconciliation and constructive involvement by Iraq's neighbors. All of Iraq's neighbors recognize that they have a stake in the outcome of the current conflict, and most are engaging with Iraq in a constructive way. For example, Jordan recently issued a statement supporting Iraqi efforts at reconciliation, and Saudi Arabia has announced a plan to open an embassy in Baghdad. Iraq's neighbors are also already contributing significantly in other ways. Seventy-four countries, including Iraq's neighbors, pledged to support and assist Iraq as it works to build a stable and prosperous nation and a self-sustaining economy at the launch of the International Compact with Iraq. Iraq's neighbors also came together in support of Iraq at the first Expanded Neighbors Ministerial in May. Meetings of the Neighbors process working groups on border security, refugees, and energy were held this summer, and a second Expanded Neighbor's Ministerial is scheduled for early November.

Question. Iran's President made a public statement that Iran would be ready to fill the vacuum of American power if we withdraw from the region. What was the motivation of making that statement?

Answer. I cannot speculate about President Ahmadinejad's motivations. While this is not the first provocative statement that he has made, I believe we should take it seriously as an indication of Iran's intentions in Iraq. Iran has long had heg-

emonic aspirations, and today we see it trying to flex its muscle at the expense of regional stability. We have sent a clear message to the Iranian Government that the United States will continue meeting our long-term political and security commitments to our regional partners and that we will protect our interests in the region. Our commitment to an enduring relationship with the Iraqi Government underscores this message.

In my discussions with representatives of the Iranian and Iraqi Governments regarding Iraqi security, I have emphasized that Iran and the United States share a common interest in ensuring a stable, secure Iraq at peace with its neighbors. To the extent that Iran provides reconstruction assistance, Iran can play a helpful role in Iraq. However, to the extent that the Iranian Government continues allowing the Quds Force to provide lethal support to militants in Iraq, Iran is working against both U.S. and Iraqi interests. The Iranian Government must curtail the Quds Force's malign activities in Iraq—which include providing funding, training, and arms for militias—bringing them into line with the Iranian Government's stated policy of supporting the Iraqi Government. As President Bush made clear in January, coalition forces will also continue to disrupt and destroy foreign weapons networks—regardless of nationality—that are facilitating instability in Iraq.

Question. Moqtada al-Sadr recently announced the suspension of activities by his Mahdi militia for a period of 6 months. What is Sadr's motivation by doing this? How will the Jaysh al-Mandi respond? How much control does Sadr personally exercise over the JAM? Do you suspect this decision was taken to consolidate the militia's strength in preparation for a future offensive?

Answer. Moqtada al-Sadr's announcement was motivated, at least in part, by the fact that the Jaysh al-Mahdi's recent attacks on worshippers in Karbala provoked a strong backlash among moderate Shia.

We welcomed the announcement ordering Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) forces to stand down. We have seen reduced activity by some of the JAM that appear to be honoring his order; however, explosively formed projectile attacks and rocket attacks have continued in some areas. We continue to monitor developments closely because the degree to which the JAM actually abides by this suspension of activities could demonstrate al-Sadr's degree of personal control. Whether or not he plans a future offensive, he apparently hopes to avoid armed confrontations with coalition forces and ISF that would prove costly to the JAM.

Question. What is your assessment of the cooperation of Iraq's leaders at the top of the government (the President, Prime Minister, and deputy presidents)? Do you believe their cooperation, if successful, can lead to agreements on key political issues such as oil legislation, de-Baathification, and detainee policy? Do they have the proxy of the political parties and Iraqi people to forge these agreements? Will they have the ability to get support for these agreements through Parliament?

Answer. Political negotiations take time, but we are seeing some progress. On August 26, Iraqi leaders, including Prime Minister Maliki, President Talabani, Vice Presidents Abdul Mahdi and Hashemi, and Kurdistan Regional Government President Barzani signed an agreement pledging cooperation on a number of key political issues. Subsequently, agreement was reached on a new de-Baathification reform law that has been sent to the Council of Representatives (COR) for discussion. They also found common ground on detainees, power-sharing, and other pieces of legislation on which they could not agree in the past.

How these recent political agreements by Iraq's political leaders will play out in the Council of Representatives is yet to be seen and ongoing tensions among them will continue to be a challenge. However, these recent developments are promising and may represent important steps toward resolution of these previously divisive issues.

RESPONSES OF GEN DAVID PETRAEUS TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY SENATOR GEORGE V. VOINOVICH

Question. Is our government doing any integrated strategic planning for a potential drawdown or change in mission focus (which some might refer to as an exit strategy)? If so, what kind of missions would we continue to perform in the long term, if we reduced forces to a minimal presence?

Answer. We are in the midst of planning for the drawdown of the five surge brigades, two Marine battalions, and Marine Expeditionary Unit that I discussed during testimony. This planning is being coordinated with our parent headquarters, U.S. Central Command, and with the Joint Staff. Likewise, we are coordinating this

change in force posture with the U.S. Mission–Iraq so we can jointly plan for needed adjustments to support the political, economic, and diplomatic lines of operation. As I noted in my testimony, I will not be able to make a recommendation on a change in mission focus or future force posture beyond the drawdown of the surge combat formations until March 2008, based on conditions on the ground in Iraq.

The operational environment, the capacity of the Iraqi security forces, and the support of coalition partners will determine what missions we could conduct with significantly less forces than are available at present. There are certain core missions we envision conducting for some time, even after the security situation has become sustainable by the Iraqis, including counterterrorism and advising the Iraqi security forces. One of the important lessons we have learned, however, is that counterterrorism operations work best when combined with the population security mission performed by conventional ground forces, given the actionable intelligence generated by a population that feels secure enough to provide tips and denies sanctuaries to terrorists.

Question. What motivates Sunni Tribal Leaders to cooperate with the United States? What role do they see for themselves in the future of Iraq? Do you believe it is possible that U.S. support for Sunni Arab militia groups will undermine Sunni-Shiite reconciliation efforts?

Answer. Sunni Tribal Leaders cooperate with coalition forces primarily because they recognize al-Qaeda-lraq to be a more proximate and severe threat to their basic interests than other possible threats. I believe the majority of Sunnis have come to the realization that they will not lead Iraq nationally again and that they instead need to band together and work with other Iraqi parties to form political blocs, not insurgent groups, if they are to have lasting influence in the government. It is possible that coalition force support of Sunni Arab militia groups could cause defensive reactions by the Shia-dominated government. But the Government of Iraq to date, though showing concern in many cases, has conducted genuine outreach to Sunni tribes and continues to pursue these initiatives through the efforts of its National Reconciliation Committee.

Question. How will the U.S. forces handle the instability in the Shia-dominated south where several militias are vying for power? Can the Sunni Awakening lessons be applied there as well? Are there moderate forces that can work with the U.S. forces?

Answer. The instability in the Shia south can in general be attributed to the struggle between competing political parties. While worrisome and tragic, especially in the cases of the assassinations of the governors of Muthanna and Qadisiyah provinces, the ongoing struggle has remained at a level that has generally been managed by Iraqi security forces supported by our coalition partners and several Special Forces teams. Moreover, this competition between Shia blocs in the south will certainly continue, but I believe that a maturing political process, supported by the actions of the Iraqi security forces with coalition assistance, will for the most part prevent a slide into widespread instability.

There is no direct parallel between the Sunni "Tribal Awakening" and the Shia south that would allow for the easy extrapolation of that model. The Shia south is defined more by the struggle for power and economic resources between two major groups (the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq and the Sadrists) than by tribal structure. Overlaid on this struggle are competing theologies and political philosophies. The Sunni awakening was characterized more by tribal rejection of foreign-led actors committing barbaric acts against the Sunni people.

Coalition forces and the Government of Iraq remain committed to reaching out to all political, religious, and tribal forces in the south that are willing to help reduce malign external influences and contribute to a stable environment. There are many moderates in the Shia south that we already work with, and though we don't work directly with him, the calming influence of Grand Ayatollah Sistani also plays an important role in dampening flareups between the two dominant blocs and ensuring that Sunni political influence remains viable in Baghdad.

Question. Do regional states understand that the worse Iraq becomes, the worse it becomes for them? How are they contributing to Iraq's stability? Do they meet regularly? What is the best forum or diplomatic tool for bringing the right players together to discuss the future of Iraq? For example, was the forum in Sharm el-Sheikh useful? Do you expect the Istanbul regional ministerial meeting to make a difference on these issues?

Answer. My diplomatic counterpart Ambassador Crocker works closely with the Iraqi and regional leaders on these important diplomatic issues. This question is best answered by his team and the Department of State.

Question. Do you expect much from the new mandate for the U.N. assistance mission (UNAMI) and its new special representative? Can the U.N. act as a leader in coordinating outside help and making a significant difference in Iraq?

Answer. MNF–I joins with the U.S. Embassy in welcoming the United Nations' efforts to contribute to a stable, secure Iraq and appreciates the expanded mandate for UNAMI. We look forward to the arrival of the new special representative, Mr. Staffan Di Mistura. As outlined in UNAMI's mandate, we hope to see increased efforts to strengthen institutions for representative government, promote political dialogue and national reconciliation, increase electoral support, resolve disputed internal borders relating to Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution, and increase efforts to deliver humanitarian assistance.

Question. Are the players in the region ready for a U.S. withdrawal, if it happens? What have you done to get Iraq's neighbors to build political reconciliation in Iraq and prepare for a pending withdrawal of U.S. forces? Will they be willing to step in and contribute significantly if they know that we plan to stay there for the foreseeable future?

Answer. As the Coalition Military Commander in Iraq, I am focused on security conditions within Iraq. Ambassador Crocker is working closely with Government of Iraq leaders as they engage with Iraq's neighbors to build political reconciliation. I would respectfully suggest that this question could be better answered by either the United States Mission–Iraq or U.S. Central Command.

Question. Iran's President made a public statement that Iran would be ready to fill the vacuum of American power if we withdraw from the region. What was the motivation of making that statement?

Answer. We have no unique insights into the motivations of the Iranian regime leadership. However, his statement is consistent with Iran's current actions to undermine the sovereign Government of Iraq by arming, training, and funding Shia extremist militants who serve as proxies for Iran. The Iranian regime's activities in Iraq are patterned after its relationship with Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Question. Moqtada al-Sadr recently announced the suspension of activities by his Mahdi militia for a period of 6 months. What is Sadr's motivation by doing this? How will the Jaysh al-Mahdi respond? How much control does Sadr personally exercise over the JAM? Do you suspect this decision was taken to consolidate the militia's strength in preparation for a future offensive?

Answer. Moqtada al-Sadr stated his motivation for suspending the activities of the Mahdi Army was "to restructure the army in a manner that will preserve the prestige of [the Sadrist] ideology." However, we believe Sadr has two motives. One motive is to distance himself and his organization from the conflict in Karbala in August 2007 and the spate of political assassinations over the past 2 months that sullied the image of his organization in the eyes of many Shia. Sadr hopes the cease-fire will help restore respect to his movement and also isolate and eliminate "rogue" elements of the Mahdi Army that no longer respond to Sadr's orders. A second motive is to restructure the organization. We believe this stated "restructuring" will consist mainly of removing leaders who are disloyal or ineffective at controlling subordinate JAM members. Sadr will search for new commanders he believes are loyal and obedient.

We expect Jaysh al-Mahdi's response will be mixed—and that has been the case so far. Loyal mainstream JAM elements will most likely cease activity. Rogue or criminal elements will continue their actions, which are largely revenue driven. JAM Special Groups will continue their attacks on coalition forces.

Sadr maintains control over a large number of JAM members. However, JAM Special Groups do not appear to believe that Sadr's order applies to them and thus continue to attack coalition forces. Other criminal elements use the guise of JAM to extort and intimidate local individuals and businesses for personal gain and owe no allegiance to Sadr. Although the cease-fire has led to a drop in the number of Shia extremists we have captured and killed in the past month, we do not believe that Sadr's decision to call for a cease-fire was aimed at consolidating his forces for a future offensive.

Question. What is your assessment of the cooperation of Iraq's leaders at the top of the govemment (the President, Prime Minister, and deputy presidents)? Do you believe their cooperation, if successful, can lead to agreements on key political issues such as oil legislation, de-Baathification, and detainee policy? Do they have the proxy of the political parties and Iraqi people to forge these agreements? Will they have the ability to get support for these agreements through Parliament?

Answer. The Iraqi leaders have demonstrated their willingness and ability to work with each other, providing an example of reconciliation for all Iraqis, though there has been tension among the senior leaders. The recent communiqué that the "Top Five" (Prime Minister Maliki, President Talabani, Vice President Hashimi, Vice President Mahdi, and Kurdish Regional Government President Barzani) issued demonstrated their willingness to look past divisive issues of sect and ethnicity and to instead focus on transparency and dialogue to solve problems, forge political consensus, and establish an Iraqi national identity.

The communiqué was a critical first step toward addressing and resolving the issues of a high-level political process, oil legislation, de-Baathification, and associated national legislation, but the leaders require the support of their respective blocs to turn these commitments into law. That is the stage we are at now, and the outcome is still to be determined. Considerable work remains in the Council of Representatives to pass those pieces of legislation, but the daily work of the Council is moving forward as Iraqi representatives work to resolve these fundamental issues.

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