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PRESERVING PROGRESS: TRANSITIONING AUTHORITY AND IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK IN IRAQ, PART 2

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

JUNE 23, 2011

Serial No. 112–49

Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

Available via the World Wide Web: http://www.foreignaffairs.house.gov/

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

67–053PDF WASHINGTON : 2011

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Internet: bookstore.gpo.gov Phone: toll free (866) 512–1800; DC area (202) 512–1800
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PRESERVING PROGRESS: TRANSITIONING AUTHORITY AND IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK IN IRAQ, PART 2

THURSDAY, JUNE 23, 2011

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST
AND SOUTH ASIA,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:15 p.m., in room 2172 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Steve Chabot (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. CHABOT. The meeting will come to order. Good afternoon. I want to welcome all of my colleagues. And we will have more coming in as we just had a series of votes on the floor. The hearing, this, of course, is the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

We are now approximately 5 months away from the December 31st, 2011 deadline, when, according to the current Status of Forces Agreement with the Government of Iraq, all U.S. armed forces must leave Iraq.

Starting on January 1st, 2012, the State Department will take the lead implementing all U.S. policy in Iraq. Earlier this month, administration witnesses from the Department of State, Department of Defense, and USAID testified before this subcommittee about the current plan to transition from a Defense lead to a State lead. Regrettably, their testimony stoked, rather than allayed, my fears.

I recently travelled to Iraq, where I was able to see just how critical the work of our military continues to be. In conjunction with their Iraqi partners on the ground, their hard work has helped to set Iraq on the course to becoming a stable, secure, and democratic country that respects human rights. That certainly is the goal. But even as we celebrate these hard-won gains, we must remember that we are not there yet.

Iraq's recent progress is regrettably as precarious as it is positive. We cannot look at where we are today and forget where we were just a few years ago.

And although the administration's transition plan may be well-intentioned, I am concerned that it is neither well-timed nor well-reasoned. Our brave men and women in uniform have fought tirelessly for nearly a decade to get us to where we are today. Thou-

sands of American lives have been lost. Billions of dollars have been spent.

The worst possible outcome would be to withdraw our forces before Iraq is ready to stand on its own. Yet, the plans that the administration has offered to date fall short of what Iraq requires to consolidate these gains.

To quote then-Senator Hillary Clinton, it would require a willful suspension of disbelief to believe that Iraq will be where it needs to be for us to withdraw by December 31st, at least in my opinion.

It also requires a willful suspension of disbelief to believe that the State Department alone, without the help of U.S. military forces on the ground, has the capability to satisfactorily execute this mission.

Numerous challenges lay before us in Iraq. Although the Iraqi security forces have progressed by leaps and bounds over the past several years, it is an undeniable fact that our military forces continue to play a vital role on the ground. The Iraqis, despite this progress, lack certain core capabilities, like the ability to secure their own airspace.

Our continued presence functions as the ultimate guarantor of their security and enables the Iraqi security forces to continue to develop.

Not only do our forces secure Iraq from outside threats, but they also alleviate Arab-Kurdish tensions in Iraq's north. Our presence effectively allows Iraq's nascent democratic institutions to continue to develop, even as the political system, as I am sure the testimony here will address, continues to experience what we all hope are merely growing pains.

And although the U.S. has commitments elsewhere in the world, we must remain dedicated to achieving success in Iraq. There can be no question that it is in both the U.S. and Iraq's national interest to see a stable and democratic Iraq emerge that is capable of defending itself.

Such an outcome would offer a model to the Arab world at this time of transition. It would stand as definitive evidence that the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are innate human rights and do not stop at the water's edge. This is our strategic objective, and we should do everything in our power to ensure it happens, including, if need be, by considering an extension of our military presence on the ground.

A greater number of Iraqi political and military figures have recently come out in support of extending the deadline to withdraw, but, as could be expected, no one wants to foot the bill.

Iraqi domestic politics make it very difficult to outright ask the U.S. to remain in Iraq. And, as a result, Iraq's leadership is pointing fingers and passing bucks. Yet, despite this difficult situation, the only clear message from the administration is that we are happy to stay, but the Iraqis must openly ask.

I hope our witnesses today will speak to what we could be doing, which we are not, to help encourage the Iraqis to request a continued U.S. military presence. The situation requires responsible leadership, both in the U.S. and Iraq, leadership that can make the right decision even if it is unpopular. Again, it would be a failure

of colossal proportions to seize defeat from the jaws of victory. And, yet, that is precisely what I fear may come to pass.

And at this time, I would like to recognize the gentleman from New York, the ranking member of the committee, Mr. Ackerman, for 5 minutes.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I thank the chairman very much.

As I tried to suggest at our previous hearing on this subject and before that at a hearing convened in the full committee in the previous Congress, the Obama administration's plans and goals for an enduring American commitment and partnership with Iraq are likely unsustainable.

Following the death of Osama bin Laden, something worth recalling with satisfaction, many Americans and, thus, naturally many of their elected representatives feel that the time has come to wrap up an era of war. The nation's economy is struggling. The government's finances are strained. And, most critically, the public no longer feels the urgency of war.

While still content to stand in line for security at airports and get scanned and sniffed and have our luggage, et cetera, rifled through on occasion, the understanding needed to sustain the deployment of our troops and the massive expenditures of war is slipping away.

Even in Iraq, which, quite frankly, never had a thing to do with the fight against al-Qaeda, where our combat troops have departed and our remaining troops will come home by the end of this year, the momentum for our engagement is slacking.

Iraq in the minds of our constituents and, thus, in the minds of many Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle is no longer our problem. The Obama administration, however, doesn't seem to have gotten the memo and is preparing for a very considerable post-conflict engagement, requiring massive resources for U.S. diplomats and other officials aiding Iraq in its struggle to put itself together.

Unprecedented security responsibilities are going to be passed on to the U.S. mission in Iraq as well as massive and ambitious efforts to assist Iraq with its political, military, civil society, and governmental and economic development.

The administration's goal is to avoid repeating the mistakes we as a nation made, first in Afghanistan following the Soviet withdrawal, and then following the defeat of the Taliban. An abandoned Iraq could very easily become a source of considerable regional danger and instability as well as a target for even greater Iranian efforts at regional subversion and hegemonism.

On the other hand, an Iraq that successfully struggles to its feet, that develops a government capable of protecting Iraq's sovereignty, and that provides its citizens with the services that they require could be a powerful source of stability in the Persian Gulf and a check on Iranian ambitions.

I have said before, and I think it is worth repeating because the Obama administration, like its predecessors, doesn't seem to understand or believe that when it comes to this kind of major international commitment of resources and responsibility, nothing explains itself and nothing sells itself.

The basic policy of continuing engagement and support for Iraq is a good one. There is more than sufficient reason for us to remain actively and extensively engaged in helping Iraq.

The effort to sell it in Congress, which has to provide the money, and the American public, which has to agree that the expenditure is justified and worth enduring, can't even be described as a failure. To argue the sales job is a failure would be to imply that some effort has actually been made to sell it, which just isn't true.

To state the blisteringly obvious, a multi-year, multibillion-dollar political-military commitment to a foreign nation simply cannot be put on autopilot in a time of economic difficulty and fiscal austerity. It won't work, and it shouldn't be attempted.

As bad as failure to support Iraq's development over the next few years would be, a sudden collapse of that effort because of a collapse of political support here in Washington would be infinitely worse, calling into question America's reliability as a political and security partner around the world. What nation would put its trust in an ally whose promises of a long-term enduring relationship collapse in a matter of months?

It gives me no pleasure to say that the Obama administration truly is tempting fate with its current approach to Iraq, not because the policy they are pursuing is strategically unwise or beyond our ability to accomplish but, rather, because they have utterly ignored their responsibility to develop a sufficient base of political support to sustain it.

A diplomatic surge is necessary in Iraq, but a political surge is even more necessary in Washington. Times have changed, and politics have changed. And the membership of Congress has changed. The only thing that hasn't changed is the administration's belief that they can get whatever resources they need for Iraq without a sustained and aggressive outreach to Members of Congress to explain what they are doing and to persuade them of the importance of our efforts.

As President Nixon's chief economist, Herb Stein, used to say, anything that can't go on forever won't. I fear the Obama administration is about to learn that lesson the hard way.

I want to commend the chairman for holding this hearing as well as its predecessor. And I look forward to hearing from our distinguished expert witnesses. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much.

And we appreciate our very distinguished panel here this afternoon, the other members. Did you want to make a statement?

Mr. HIGGINS. Just what——

Mr. CHABOT. Go ahead. Go ahead.

Mr. HIGGINS. No. Let's get to the testimony. Then I can. Thank you.

Mr. CHABOT. Okay. We will get to it in the questions, then. As I indicated, we have a very distinguished panel. I would like to do the introductions at this time.

First we have Max Boot. He is the Jeane J. Kirkpatrick Senior Fellow in National Security Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations as well as contributing editor to the Weekly Standard, a great publication in my opinion, and the Los Angeles Times. He also serves as an adviser to U.S. commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan

and was a senior foreign policy adviser to Senator John McCain's Presidential campaign.

Before joining the Council in 2002, Mr. Boot was the op. ed. editor of the Wall Street Journal. He has an M.A. in history from Yale University and a B.A. in history from the University of California at Berkeley. We welcome you this afternoon.

Then we next have Michael Eisenstadt, who is a senior fellow and director of the Washington Institute's Military and Security Studies Program. Mr. Eisenstadt earned an M.A. in Arab studies from Georgetown University.

Prior to joining the Institute in 1989, Mr. Eisenstadt worked as a military analyst. He also served for 26 years as an officer in the United States Army Reserve. And, on behalf of the subcommittee, I would like to say thank you for your service to the country, Mr. Eisenstadt.

Next we have Richard Fontaine, who is a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security. He previously served as foreign policy adviser also to Senator John McCain. He has also worked at the State Department, the National Security Council, and on the staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Senate Armed Services Committee.

Mr. Fontaine has an M.A. in international affairs from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and a B.A. in international relations from Tulane University. We welcome you here this afternoon.

And, finally, we have Marisa—is it Cochrane?—okay, Sullivan, who is a deputy director of the Institute for the Study of War and supervises the Iraqi and Afghanistan projects as well as conducts research on Iraqi political dynamics, Shia militia groups, and the security environment in central and southern Iraq.

Ms. Cochrane Sullivan previously served as the command historian for the Multinational Force Iraq and has appeared as a commentator on Iraq-related issues for the Voice of America, Los Angeles Times, Fox News, and other media outlets. She holds a B.A. in international studies from Boston College. And we welcome you here as well.

As far as the rules of the committee, you will all receive 5 minutes. And there is a lighting system. The yellow light will indicate you have 1 minute to wrap up. If the red light comes on, we would appreciate it if you would complete your testimony at that time. And we also limit ourselves to the 5 minutes to ask questions.

So, Mr. Boot, you are first. You are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF MR. MAX BOOT, JEANE J. KIRKPATRICK SENIOR FELLOW FOR NATIONAL SECURITY STUDIES, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. BOOT. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for calling this hearing to call attention to it. I think all of us probably agree it is one of the most important, yet least recognized, foreign policy issues that we confront in the next 6 months while Libya, Afghanistan, and many other conflicts get headlines for understandable reasons.

I think you are quite right to point out the central importance of Iraq and the need to have a good outcome to that conflict, which

has already cost so many American lives, which has cost also so much American treasure. None of that we want to see go to waste.

I think the way we prevent that from going to waste is exactly along the lines of what you suggested as we need to have continued engagement in Iraq. And I don't think it can be exclusively diplomatic engagement because the situation there is still too fragile. I mean, if you look at other post-conflict situations, such as Bosnia or Kosovo, if you go back further to Germany, Japan, Italy, and many others, the key to long-term stability has been long-term security provided by an American troop presence or by some other international peacekeeping presence.

Iraq has come a long way since the terrible days of 2006–2007, when balance was tearing the country apart. But those tensions have not fully healed. The suspicions still run high.

I was struck by the fact that when I was last in Iraq in March, I arrived in the middle of yet another crisis between the Iraqi security forces and the Kurdish pesh merga. Of course, this is nothing unexpected because pretty much every single time I have traveled to Iraq—and I have traveled there once or twice a year since 2003—pretty much every single time I arrive, the pesh merga and the Iraqi security forces seem to be on the verge of shooting it out with one another.

And what prevents that from happening is the fact that U.S. forces are sitting in the middle and the fact that U.S. officers are trusted interlocutors for both sides, and they can bring the two sides, who would not otherwise speak to one another, they can bring them together in a room and get them to hash out their differences before an actual shooing would erupt.

And, of course, there are many other tensions that lie not so far beneath the surface of Iraqi politics; whereas, we see terrorist attacks by al-Qaeda in Iraq as well as by Shiite groups and other Sunni groups as well continue to occur, continue to cost Iraqi lives.

It is a very stable, very fragile situation. And I am very concerned about what would happen if U.S. troops were to pull out entirely at the end of the year. I think that would be a catastrophe for Iraq. And it would be a catastrophe for American foreign policy.

It would make it impossible to achieve our goals in Iraq, which are to have a country that is a moderate ally in the Middle East and exemplar of democratic values and a bulwark of stabilization and moderation.

All of that is enabled by an American troop presence going forward, I believe. It doesn't have to be a huge troop presence. I would be comfortable with something on the order of 20,000 troops. I think the administration is probably looking at somewhere around the order of 10,000. Even that is far, far better than zero.

The time is running out, as you know. By mid September, U.S. troops are going to be on a fast track out of Iraq. And to bring them back after that will be costly financially. It will be costly in terms of deployment schedules. And it will also be very difficult to do politically.

Now, the problem is as we know, the last time we negotiated a Status of Forces Agreement with Iraq, which was in 2008, it took more than 1 year. Right now we have less than half a year before

the lights go out and considerably less than that before the troops start pulling out en masse.

Now, I think you are quite right to note that there has been some progress, that Prime Minister Maliki I think has indicated that he would be interested in having American troops there. And I think the Obama administration has finally made a decision that it is in our interest to have American troops there as well. They are tardy in this regard, and I wish they had been lobbying and pushing on that issue 1 year ago but better late than never.

The question is whether we can get a deal done in time. And, as we have seen in Iraq time and time again, since 2003, nothing ever comes together when you want it to. It always goes into the 11th hour and sometimes frequently beyond.

I think Mr. Ackerman raises a very good point as well when he talks about the lack of political groundwork which has been laid in this country, to say nothing of the political groundwork in Iraq and, really, either country by the two governments to sustain political support for a continuing American presence. This is really an issue I think.

Although the decisions our President Obama has made have been fairly responsible, he has really been AWOL in terms of advocating for those decisions and advocating for a greater American presence in Iraq.

And, you know, I think there is still support on the Hill, and I think there is still support in the country for a larger presence. However, a lot more needs to be done to explain why it is necessary, why it is in our interest. And Prime Minister Maliki has a huge selling job, obvious, an even bigger selling job in Iraq to bring the other political factions on board so they don't spend their time simply embarrassing him but act in the greater Iraqi good, which requires, I believe, a longer-term American troop presence.

I think we can get it done, but time is running out. And I am very concerned about the consequences of failure.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Boot follows:]

COUNCIL *on* FOREIGN RELATIONS

June 23, 2011

Prepared statement by
Max Boot
Jeane J. Kirkpatrick Senior Fellow for National Security Studies
Council on Foreign Relations

Before the
Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia
United States House of Representatives
1st Session, *112th* Congress

Preserving Progress: Transitioning Authority and Implementing the Strategic Framework in Iraq, Part 2

Chairman Chabot, Congressman Ackerman, members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for inviting me to testify about one of the most important—yet least publicized—foreign policy decisions that looms in the next six months. Namely, the nature of our future relationship with Iraq.

The armed force—and to a much lesser degree the people—of the United States have made tremendous sacrifices since 2003 to ensure a decent outcome in Iraq. After suffering tens of thousands of casualties and spending trillions of dollars, we have finally achieved a measure of stability, however tenuous. Civilian casualties are down more than 90% from 2006, the Iraqi security forces have more than tripled in size (and capabilities) since then, the oil industry has let contracts to foreign companies and oil revenues are increasing. Most improbably of all, Iraq is emerging as a possible democratic model for the rest of the region.

But we should not get carried away. Just as there was a danger in 2006 of excessive defeatism so today there is a danger of excessive triumphalism.

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Iraq was still paralyzed for ten months last year in the process of selecting a new government after elections that were generally judged free and fair. A coalition government was finally formed but no agreement was reached on who would head two of the most important ministries—defense and interior. Both jobs are now held by Prime Minister Maliki, fueling suspicions among his rivals of what they view as his dictatorial tendencies.

Terrorists continue to mount attacks at an unacceptable rate. More than 2,500 Iraqi civilians died last year, suggesting that major security problems remain. Al Qaeda in Iraq remains active despite its premature obituary having been written many times in the past. Shiite terrorist groups funded by Iran and associated with Moqtada al Sadr's Mahdist movement are also a constant menace. One of their rocket attacks on June 6 killed five American soldiers. More such attacks should be expected as Iran exports the Hezbollah model to Iraq, trying to give the impression that Shiite fighters are driving us out in defeat.

While the Iraqi security forces have grown in size and capacity they are focused almost entirely on an internal policing role. They have almost no capacity to defend their country from external aggression from Iran or any other neighbor. Iraq still has no functioning air-control system and no interceptor aircraft such as the F-16 whose purchase has been postponed. The army is only now receiving 155mm guns, M1 tanks, M113 armored personnel carriers, and other U.S. heavy equipment. Iraqi soldiers have had no time to train on any of it. Indeed the Iraqi army has not been able to conduct large-scale combined arms exercise which are a perquisite for military effectiveness against any conventional foe—or even for deterrence. When I was in Iraq in March--the latest in a regular series of visits I have made since 2003 to assess the situation at the invitation of U.S. commanders—I met a group of Iraqi air force pilots who seemed capable and dedicated. But they are still flying unarmed trainer aircraft that have no offensive capability at all. Even to continue conducting internal security operations, the Iraqi forces must still rely on American aid particularly in intelligence, communications, and logistics.

Even though all sides in Iraq's politics are able to negotiate in parliament, tensions remain high and skepticism runs deep. I arrived in March during the umpteenth crisis between the Iraqi security forces and the Kurdish pesh merga with both sides threatening to open fire at one another. Only the presence of U.S. military forces acting in a peacekeeping capacity along the Green Line between the Kurdish Regional Government and Iraq proper prevented hostilities from breaking out.

What will happen next year, I wonder, if the U.S. troops are no longer there to act as a buffer? What if the American safety net is removed? Iraq may be perfectly fine in any case but the odds of a catastrophic failure certainly go up without our help.

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Unless a new Status of Forces Agreement is reached, at the end of this year we will go from nearly 50,000 U.S. soldiers in Iraq to little more than 100 in an Office of Security Cooperation. The State Department claims it can carry on by deploying 16,000 contractors to support roughly 1,000 diplomatic personnel. I hope the State Department is right, but I fear it is wrong. Certainly there is great skepticism within the military and even within the State Department's own ranks about its ability to run a mission far more ambitious than any it has attempted in the past. The majority staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee produced a persuasive report in January that concluded that "it is unclear whether the State Department has the capacity to maintain and protect the currently planned diplomatic presence without U.S. military support." Nothing that I have seen since January increases my confidence in State's capability to carry off such a challenging mission.

Even if State were more successful than widely expected, moreover, there is simply no way it can carry off most of the missions currently performed by the U.S. military. State Department contractors will not be conducting joint patrols with the Iraqi Security Forces and the pesh merga along the Green Line. Nor will Foreign Service Officers be able to maintain all the relationship that our troops currently have with Iraqi civilians and government personnel. The result will be a severe loss of "situational awareness".

In particular we will have much less capacity to resist Iranian designs. Iran aims to dominate Iraq to the largest extent possible. Its Quds Force has been a destabilizing factor in Iraq for years, conducting activities from arming militants to bribing politicians. The extent to which Iraq can become an Iranian client state has been wildly exaggerated. Iraqis, even Shiites, have no desire to be subservient to their Persian neighbors. But if we pull all of our forces out, we will be handing the Iranians a gift by allowing them to exert even more influence than they currently do.

I am heartened that in the last month there has been some movement toward renewing the Status of Forces Agreement. After dithering for far too long—waiting in vain for the Iraqis to come to us—the Obama administration finally reached an internal decision that it would be in our interest to maintain a small troop presence beyond December 31. The size of the force reportedly contemplated by the administration—around 10,000 troops—is on the low end of what I judge to be the minimum necessary. I would be much more comfortable with around 20,000 troops, given the number of missions they must carry out. But 10,000 is a lot better than zero.

Prime Minister Maliki is reportedly supportive of such an extension for U.S. forces to provide training and equipment to the Iraqi armed forces, to conduct targeted counter-terrorism missions, and, one hopes, to continue peacekeeping along the Green Line.

The problem is how to get all of Iraq's fractious political parties on board. Only one party—the Sadrists--is adamantly opposed to any extension of the U.S. force presence. But the other parties are intent on playing politics above all—something that I know will be shocking to lawmakers in Washington. Many of them

appear to be more interested in embarrassing Maliki than in serving the greater public interest. If Maliki asks for an extension of the U.S. troop presence, his myriad critics will claim that he is admitting his own failure to effectively build up the Iraqi security forces to defend their country. If he doesn't ask for an extension, they will accuse him of being an Iranian stooge. Maliki understandably would like wide agreement before embarking on such a controversial course of action.

But if we have learned anything about Iraqi politics since 2003 it is that no major issue can be resolved until the 11th hour—and sometimes beyond. The negotiation of the last Status of Forces Agreement, unveiled in 2008, took more than a year. Today we have less than half a year before the last U.S. troops turn out the lights. Or actually less time than that, because by late September remaining U.S. forces will have to push for the exits in order to meet the December 31 deadline. It might be possible to agree on some kind of temporary extension. If we don't, it will be very expensive to shut down bases and remove personnel, only to reopen the bases and bring back the troops. In addition the U.S. Army needs to set its unit rotations for the year ahead well in advance. The lack of progress in negotiating an accord—a process only now starting—obviously makes that impossible.

I am skeptical that any agreement can be reached by December 31 if the U.S. or Iraqi governments insist on submitting it for ratification to Iraq's parliament. Better to sign a government-to-government agreement that does not require legislative ratification on either side. That is our standard way of operating in most other countries where U.S. troops are based. And cutting out Iraq's parliament should be more palatable now, when we only propose to keep 10,000 or so troops in Iraq, than it was in 2008 when we were trying to get authority to keep more than 150,000 troops.

I would hope that, even if your approval isn't required, that members of Congress will be supportive of an extension of the U.S. military presence. This does not mean that the Iraq War, which so many opposed, will continue. Rather this would represent our best bet for preventing another war and consolidating the progress that so many have sacrificed so much to achieve.

I know that many on Capitol Hill would like more acknowledgement from Iraqis of their gratitude for being liberated from Saddam Hussein. There is even considerable sentiment to demand that the Iraqis subsidize at least part of the costs of our military mission. That would be nice, but given the difficulties of getting an agreement at all, I think it is unlikely in the extreme that Iraqi politicos will agree to spend their scarce government revenues—which are needed to rebuild a society devastated by international sanctions, dictatorship, and war—to help pay for the cost of a troop presence by the world's richest nation. Nor should we make this a condition for our continued presence. I realize that we have our own fiscal woes, but keeping 10,000 or so troops in Iraq will still cost much less than our current troop presence. And much less than taking them all out. This is in fact a low-cost insurance policy to prevent an implosion that could destabilize not only Iraq but its neighbors as well.

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I know that the Iraq War evokes mixed emotions among Americans, to put it mildly. But even those who opposed the war from the start have a stake, I submit, in making sure that we do not exit Iraq as haphazardly and self-destructively as we entered. We still have the chance to salvage something worthwhile out of all the fiascos that characterized the early years of the war. We can still turn Iraq into a vital ally in the Middle East—into a bulwark against both Sunni and Shiite extremists. But only if we invest in the future of the relationship now.

The best investment we can make is to continue a limited U.S. military presence. Indeed if there is one iron law of American military history it is that the longer we stay in a country after a war, the better the chances of a successful outcome. Germany, Japan, Italy, South Korea, even Bosnia and Kosovo: all have been relatively successful because we have made long-term commitments. Contrast this with Lebanon, Haiti, Somalia: all places that we left prematurely. Which one would we like Iraq to resemble?

Thank you for your time and attention. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

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Mr. CHABOT. Complete? Okay. Thank you very much. We appreciate your testimony.

Mr. Eisenstadt, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF MR. MICHAEL EISENSTADT, DIRECTOR, MILITARY & SECURITY STUDIES PROGRAM, THE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST POLICY

Mr. EISENSTADT. Chairman Chabot, Ranking Member Ackerman, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me here to testify about Iraq. And on behalf of all those who care about Iraq and its future, thank you for keeping Iraq in the public eye.

Ongoing violence in Iraq, albeit at much lower levels than in the past, underscore the fact that the United States still faces major challenges to realizing its long-term policy objectives there.

These events underscore that security is still job number one for the United States and the Government of Iraq. In this vein, the ongoing activities of Iranian supported special groups, groups such as JRTN and al-Qaeda, show that there is still too much to be done here.

The intensified activities of Iranian supported special groups, which have ramped-up attacks on U.S. personnel in recent months, are a special source of concern. While it may be unrealistic to expect Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki to speak out openly against these Shiite special groups since some of these groups have ties to some of his coalition partners, it is essential that his actions demonstrate that the Government of Iraq is a full partner in efforts to target these groups. Maliki's willingness to do so will be a litmus test of the kind of relationship the U.S. can have with an Iraq under his leadership.

The U.S. role will face a range of additional challenges in the coming years: First, countering Iranian influence. Iran's attempts to wield its influence in Iraq have thus far yielded only mixed results, and the impending U.S. military drawdown or withdrawal from Iraq will present new opportunities for Iran to enhance its influence.

It remains to be seen whether Iranian influence will continue to be self-limiting or whether this emerging reality will create new opportunities for Teheran to transform Iraq into a weak client state via a gradual process of Lebanonization.

Thus, while assessments of Iran as the big winner in Iraq are premature, they may yet prove prescient if the United States does not work energetically to counter Iranian influence there in the years to come.

U.S. interests in Iraq can be advanced only if the United States continues to engage Iraq on a wide variety of fronts, diplomatic, economic, informational, and military, and to counter Iran's whole-of-government approach to Iraq with a whole-of-government approach of its own. And I have some ideas in the paper I have submitted on what the U.S. should be doing there.

Secondly, a business surge for Iraq. The strategic framework agreement commits the United States and Iraq to a broad-based relationship. One of the most important elements of this relationship is trade and investment, which can provide Iraq's citizens with a modicum of prosperity, and help counter Teheran's efforts to estab-

lish a relationship of economic dependency that will enhance its leverage over Baghdad. Here U.S. actions lag behind words.

At present, there are only two Commerce Department officials in Embassy Baghdad to facilitate business in Iraq. This needs to change. Moreover, the U.S. Government should provide tax incentives for companies investing directly in Iraq and do a better job of informing businesses of the range of insurance products available to help diffuse the risk of doing business there.

Third, preventive diplomacy and peacekeeping. The U.S. military continues to play a critical role in managing tensions between the Federal Government in Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government, centering on the City of Kirkuk, and the so-called disputed internal boundaries areas.

Should the Government of Iraq ask the U.S. to maintain a military presence in Iraq beyond the end of this year, keeping these troops in place would not be a high price to pay for keeping the peace in Iraq. Now, we know we are talking, really, about 1,500 people in all engaged in these activities.

Fourth, upgrading ties with the Kurdistan Regional Government. The U.S. has an enduring interest in the continued stability of the KRG. Recognizing its importance for the stability of Iraq, Washington should take a few modest steps to upgrade ties and intensify direct contacts with the KRG and its security forces.

Furthermore, it should encourage U.S. businesses to use the KRG as a base of operations for activities in north central Federal Iraq and press the KRG to embrace political reforms that will ensure continued stability in the north. In doing so, the U.S. will need to be careful to strike a balance between supporting the KRG, on one hand, without feeding unrealistic aspirations Kurdish aspirations, for independence.

And then, fifth and finally, national reconciliation. Iraq will have a better chance of avoiding another civil war if it goes through a formal national reconciliation process. For now, hopes have been pinned on reconciliation through politics, in which a broad-based governing coalition would give elements from every community a stake in the political order. Instead, Iraqi politics since the 2010 elections have exacerbated sectarian grievances, while recent heavy-handed Government of Iraq actions against peaceful protestors inspired by the Arab Spring have reopened old wounds.

Washington should, therefore, press the Government of Iraq to permit peaceful protests and to investigate and, if necessary punish alleged human rights violations by its security forces. And it should indicate to the Government of Iraq that the quality of the U.S.-Iraq relationship will be influenced by the Government of Iraq's adherence to international human rights standards.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Embassy should work with the Government of Iraq, international and Iraqi nongovernmental organizations, and the United Nations to draw up a blueprint for a national reconciliation process that incorporates lessons from elsewhere but that also reflects Iraqi cultural values, preferences, and political realities.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Eisenstadt follows:]

United States Policy Toward Iraq: Future Challenges
Michael Eisenstadt[1]

Testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia
"Preserving Progress:
Transitioning Authority and Implementing the Strategic Framework in Iraq, Part 2"
June 23, 2011

Chairman Chabot, Ranking Member Ackerman, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, thank you for inviting me here today to testify about Iraq. And let me take this opportunity to thank you on behalf of all who care about Iraq and its future for keeping Iraq in the public eye.

Events of recent weeks—intensified attacks on U.S. civilian and military personnel in Iraq, ongoing political and terrorist violence against Iraqis, and tensions related to the brewing debate in Iraq about the U.S. military presence beyond 2011—underscore the fact that the United States still faces major challenges in realizing its long-term goal of establishing an Iraq that is, in the words of President Barack Obama, "sovereign, stable, and self-reliant."

While these events underscore that security is still job number one for the United States and the Government of Iraq (GoI), several other factors will affect Washington's ability to work with Baghdad to preserve the security gains of recent years, build a strategic partnership with the government and people of Iraq, and influence developments there.

The U.S. military drawdown and the transition from Department of Defense to Department of State lead in Iraq have produced a decrease in situational awareness among U.S. personnel in Iraq, with:

- the decline in the number of military boots on ground;
- the lack of relative in-country experience (most diplomats are on their first or second tour in Iraq, while many military are on their third, fourth, or fifth tour);
- the failure to institutionalize Iraq experience at State (many of the State employees with the most experience on the ground are not career employees, but 3161s who are temporary hires), and;
- diminished freedom of movement due to the loss of military mobility assets, and Department of State travel restrictions due to security concerns.

The U.S. will also face a range of additional challenges in the coming years:

Counterterrorism. The ongoing activities of Iranian-supported special groups, the Men of the Army of the Naqshbandiya Order (JRTN), and al-Qaida, show that there is still much to be done here. The intensified activities of Iranian-supported special groups, which have ramped-up attacks on U.S. personnel in recent months, are a special source of concern. While it may be unrealistic to expect Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki to speak out openly against these Shiite special groups (since some of these groups have ties to some of his coalition partners), it is essential that his actions demonstrate that the GoI is a full partner in efforts to target these groups. Maliki's willingness to do so is a litmus test of the kind of ally he is, and the kind of relationship the U.S. can have with an Iraq under his leadership.

Countering Iranian Influence. Iran's attempts to wield its influence in Iraq have thus far yielded only mixed results, though the formation of a new government that incorporates many of Tehran's closest Iraqi allies and the impending U.S. military drawdown or withdrawal from Iraq, will present new opportunities for Iran to enhance its influence. It remains to be seen whether Iranian influence will continue to be "self-

[1] Senior Fellow and Director of the Military and Security Studies Program at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

limiting" (i.e., because Iranian pressure engenders Iraqi push-back) or whether this emerging reality will create new opportunities for Tehran to transform Iraq into a weak client state via a gradual process of "Lebanonization."

Over the long run, the nature of the relationship between Iraq and Iran will depend largely on the security situation in Iraq, the political complexion of the Iraqi government, the type of long-term relationship Iraq builds with the United States, and the tenor of Sunni-Shiite and Arab-Iran relations in the Gulf in the wake of the Saudi-led intervention in Bahrain to quash popular unrest there. Moreover, Iraq's reemergence as a major oil exporter and perhaps, as a patron for Arab Shiite communities in the Gulf, will almost certainly heighten tensions between the two countries.

Thus, while assessments of Iran as the big "winner" in Iraq are premature, they may yet prove prescient if the United States does not work energetically to counter Iranian influence there in the years to come—particularly Iranian "soft power" in the political, economic, religious, and informational domains, which may pose a greater long-term threat to Iraqi sovereignty and independence than Iraq's current military weakness. For these reasons, Washington should:

- continue to support stabilization efforts by the Iraqi Security Forces;
- support coalition-building that marginalizes militant Sadrists and other extremists;
- build the kind of relationship described in the U.S.- Iraq Strategic Framework Agreement;
- aid in the development of Iraq's economy—particularly its oil and energy sectors, and;
- quietly maintain open channels with the Shiite clerical establishment in Najaf to keep a finger on the pulse of Shiite opinion.

Furthermore, the public diplomacy section of the Embassy in Baghdad should be augmented by a Military Information Support (MIST) Team.[2] Nearly a decade of experience demonstrates that information operations that show how Iran and its surrogates operate in Iraq are among the most effective means of countering Iranian influence there.[3]

If the post-2011 level of U.S. engagement with Iraq is too modest, Iran—which enjoys closer, more varied, and more extensive ties with Iraq than does the United States or any state in the region—will almost certainly seek to expand its influence to confirm its position as the paramount outside power in Iraq. This will have adverse consequences for U.S. influence throughout the region and U.S. efforts to deter and contain an increasingly assertive Iran.

Such an eventuality can be averted, and U.S. interests in Iraq advanced, only if the United States continues to engage Iraq on a wide variety of fronts—diplomatic, economic, informational, and military—and to counter Iran's whole-of-government approach to Iraq with a whole-of-government approach of its own.[4]

A Business Surge for Iraq. The Strategic Framework Agreement commits the United States and Iraq to a broad-based relationship. One of the most important elements of this relationship is trade and investment, which can provide Iraq's citizens with a modicum of prosperity, and help counter Tehran's efforts to establish a relationship of economic dependency with Iraq, that will enhance its leverage over Baghdad. While Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has encouraged U.S. businesses to invest in Iraq, U.S. actions lag

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[2] For more on MIST teams, see: Military Information Support Team, AFRICOM Fact Sheet, July 2010, at: http://www.africom.mil/fetchBinary.asp?pdfID=20100719122755.

[3] Interview with senior U.S. military officials, Baghdad, Iraq, October 2009. A good example of these kinds of activities was the press conference held after the detention of Hizballah operative Ali Musa Daqduq and Iraqi special groups leaders Qais and Laith Khazali in July 2007. For more on this episode, see: Press Conference with Brigadier General Kevin Bergner, Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategic Effects, Multi-National Forces-Iraq, July 2, 2007, at: http://www.usf-iraq.com/?option=com_content&task=view&id=12641&Itemid=128.

[4] Michael Eisenstadt, Michael Knights, Ahmed Ali, *Iran's Influence in Iraq: Countering Tehran's Whole-of-Government Approach*, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, March 2011, at: http://www.washinginstitute.org/pubPDFs/PolicyFocus111.pdf.

behind words.[5] At present there are only two commerce department officials in Embassy Baghdad to facilitate business in Iraq, and no U.S. government representative in Iraq has a portfolio to facilitate broad strategic private sector engagement. This needs to change. Moreover, the U.S. government should provide tax incentives for companies investing directly in Iraq and do a better job of informing businesses of the range of insurance products available for firms and individuals, to help diffuse the risk of doing business there.[6]

Preventive Diplomacy and Peacekeeping. The U.S. military continues to play a critical role in managing tensions between the federal government in Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Erbil, centering on the city of Kirkuk and the so-called Disputed Internal Boundaries (DIBs).

Building trust and confidence and preventing violence along these potential flashpoints may be the best argument for an enduring, albeit much reduced U.S. military presence in Iraq. At present, only 1,500 of about 46,000 U.S. troops remaining in Iraq participate in this mission, in the form of the Combined Security Mechanism (300 in and around Kirkuk, and 1,200 in the rest of the DIBs), which consists of joint checkpoints and patrols involving Iraqi Army, Peshmerga, and U.S. Army elements.[7] Should the GoI asks the U.S. to maintain a military presence in Iraq beyond the end of this year, keeping these troops in place would not be a high price to pay for keeping the peace in Iraq.

To assist this effort, the U.S. should encourage intelligence sharing between the KRG and federal forces regarding their common al-Qaida enemy, support the integration of KRG Peshmerga Regional Guard Brigades into the newly formed Iraqi Army 15th and 16th Divisions, and find ways to work with the parties to fill the security and administrative vacuums that exist in the DIBs.[8]

Upgrading Ties with the KRG. The U.S. has an enduring interest in the continued stability of the KRG, which remains a pro-U.S. bastion in a part of the world where anti-Americanism is a staple of politics. To this end, it should remain engaged on the ground in the north to ensure that tensions between the federal government in Baghdad and the KRG are contained, and in any future efforts to resolve the problems of Kirkuk and the DIBs, and it should seek the continued integration of the KRG into federal Iraq to enhance the prospects for a successful post-conflict national reconciliation process.[9]

Recognizing its importance for the stability of Iraq and the U.S., Washington should take a few modest steps to upgrade ties and intensify direct contacts with the KRG and its security forces (perhaps deepening mil-mil ties, to include broadened training of KRG forces, in coordination with Baghdad). Furthermore, it should encourage U.S. businesses to use the KRG as a base of operations for activities in north-central federal Iraq, and press the KRG to embrace political reforms that will ensure continued stability in the north, and ensure that standards of governance in the north are consistent with those in the rest of the country (for instance, by creating a public integrity commission in the KRG like the one in Baghdad, in order to combat corruption). In doing so, the U.S. will need to be careful to strike a balance between supporting the KRG, without feeding unrealistic aspirations for independence.

National Reconciliation. Iraq will have a better chance of avoiding another civil war if it goes through a formal national reconciliation process. Iraq, however, is not yet a true post-conflict society, and it has experienced only "tactical reconciliation"—the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former

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[5] MacKenzie C. Babb, "Clinton Encourages U.S. Business to Invest in Iraq," U.S. Department of State Bureau of International Information Programs, June 3, 2011, at: http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/article/2011/06/20110603172921eiznek.cam0.9236719.html#axzz1PeCITONd.

[6] Matthew Meyer, "The Surge Iraq Really Needs: U.S. Business," Reuters Great Debate Blog, June 2, 2011, at: http://blogs.reuters.com/great-debate/2011/06/02/the-surge-iraq-really-needs-u-s-business/. Meyer is a former PRT member who served in Mosul, Iraq.

[7] "Some Suggest Requesting U.S. Troops Stay in Disputed Areas," *Kurdish Globe*, no. 305, May 21, 2011, p. 8, at: http://www.kurdishglobe.net/get-pdf-file/KurdishGlobe-2011-05-21.pdf?ID=305.

[8] Comments by Michael Knights, *Kurdistan and its Neighbors: A Trip Report*, Special Policy Forum Report, PolicyWatch No. 1816, June 15, 2011, at: http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=3369.

[9] *Ibid*, and Michael Knights with Ahmed Ali, *Kirkuk in Transition: Confidence Building in Northern Iraq*, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Policy Focus No. 102, April 2010, at: http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/pubPDFs/PolicyFocus102.pdf.

Sunni and Shiite insurgents. It has not experienced the kind of broad-based national reconciliation process that took place, for instance, in Argentina, El Salvador, and South Africa.

For now, hopes have been pinned on "reconciliation through politics," in which a broad-based governing coalition would give elements from every community a stake in the political order. Instead, Iraqi politics since the 2010 elections have exacerbated sectarian grievances, while recent heavy-handed GoI actions against peaceful protestors inspired by the Arab Spring have reopened old wounds, and raised questions about the authoritarian tendencies of the current government in Baghdad.

The sine qua non for a successful national reconciliation process is courageous, far-sighted leadership. Iraq currently lacks such leaders, although that does not mean steps cannot be taken now to lay the groundwork for reconciliation. To this end, the Washington should press the GoI to permit peaceful protests and to investigate, and if necessary punish, alleged human rights violations by its security forces. And it should indicate to the GoI that the quality of the U.S.-Iraqi relationship will be influenced by the GoI's adherence to international human rights standards. Meanwhile, the U.S. embassy should work with the government of Iraq, international and Iraqi nongovernmental organizations, and the United Nations, to draw up a blueprint for a national reconciliation process that incorporates lessons from elsewhere, but that also reflects Iraqi cultural values, preferences, and political realities.

If the GoI can govern without infringing on its people's rights, if Iraq can avoid another major round of ethno-sectarian blood-letting, and if its people can produce courageous, far-sighted leaders committed to national reconciliation—all big ifs—such a blueprint for national reconciliation could well be the most important legacy that the United States ultimately bequeaths to Iraq.[10]

Conclusion. Despite the catastrophic trajectory of events in Iraq a mere four years ago, it is remarkable that it is now possible to imagine an Iraq that is reasonably stable, and which is governed relatively democratically. Given the amount that the U.S. has invested in Iraq in blood and treasure—nearly 4,450 Americans killed and more than eight hundred billion dollars spent—it would be a shame to fail there for a lack of attention, focus, and resources.

To succeed, the U.S. needs to remain engaged in Iraq. In short, this means: 1) intensified joint CT operations; 2) continued preventive diplomacy and peacekeeping operations in Kirkuk and the DIBs (beyond this year if possible); 3) intensified efforts to counter Iranian influence; 4) enhanced support for U.S. business engagement; 5) upgraded ties with the KRG, along with pressure to reform, and; 6) pressure on the GoI to adhere to international human rights standards as a first step toward a viable national reconciliation process.

[10] Michael Eisenstadt, *'How this Ends': Iraq's Uncertain Path Toward National Reconciliation*, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, *PolicyWatch No. 1553*, July 17, 2009, at: http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=3091.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much.

Mr. Fontaine, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF MR. RICHARD FONTAINE, SENIOR FELLOW, CENTER FOR NEW AMERICAN SECURITY

Mr. FONTAINE. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Ackerman, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the privilege of testifying today. It is an honor to be here.

Though America's mission today in Iraq garners little attention from a public understandably preoccupied by the domestic economy, wars in Afghanistan and Libya, and other matters, 2011, nevertheless, remains a pivotal year in Iraq. This year's planned transition, combined with the ongoing flux in Iraqi domestic politics, will play a key role in shaping events in Iraq and in the region for years to come.

And, as our attention shifts, as we are spending a minute just to remember what our interests are in the successful outcome of the operations we have conducted in Iraq, Iraq remains a major player in the Middle East, and it will serve as a force for regional stability or instability in the future.

Since the Gulf War some 20 years ago, Iraq has at various points served as a locus of regional competition, an arena for Iranian influence, a home for al-Qaeda, and the venue for an emerging democracy.

After all of this turmoil, Iraq now has the potential to anchor stability in a region of critical importance to the United States. But the converse is also the case. An Iraq that returns to chaos and upheaval would quickly revert to a sanctuary for al-Qaeda in Iraq and see the reemergence of sectarian militias, invite further Iranian meddling, impose tremendous human costs on the Iraqi people, disrupt key oil supplies, and strengthen the hand of those who argue that only strongmen, and not democratic governance, can hold together fractious Arab states.

As December 31st looms, we can best secure our interests by retaining a modest American military presence in Iraq. Currently the Iraqi Air Force can't patrol the country's air space, and the

Navy cannot defend its waters, including its oil platforms.

The U.S. military assists Iraq security forces with intelligence, training, logistics, and maintenance, all of which are critical to the ability to counter internal threats, such as al-Qaeda and Shia militia groups, both of which remain active.

Critically, American Kurdish and Arab troops work together at checkpoints along the disputed border areas of Iraq's northern provinces. In the past, the presence of U.S. troops has been vital to preventing eruptions of hostilities between Arab and Kurdish security forces.

The United States should continue to unambiguously signal to the Iraqi leadership its willingness to secure a follow-on agreement that would permit American troops to remain in Iraq after 2011. But it must also be willing to accept that an Iraqi response, should it come, will generate lengthy and messy negotiations. Indeed, it is conceivable to me that an Iraqi request for a continued American presence could even come after December 31st. American officials

will need to exhibit significant patience and creativity through this process.

If it is impossible to secure a follow-on agreement, the State Department will embark on a difficult, ambitious mission, truly unprecedented in its history and will manage thousands of contractors to take on jobs formerly performed by the military. This, to say the least, will also demand even more patience and creativity.

In either event, the State Department will have a key diplomatic role to play. The existential threat to the Iraqi state today stems not from insurgence but from the country's political decisions. America's diplomats must maximize their leverage within democratic constraints to urge Iraqi politicians to make decisions with the interests of the country in mind, rather than faction or personality.

There is also, I believe, a role for America's political leadership as well. Iraq has become the forgotten war. And with this has come the impression among many that the fight is over. But, as we are discussing here today, in fact, the mission continues. And it is incumbent on the President and other national leaders to articulate for Congress and for the American people the stakes in Iraq, our strategic interests there, and why securing those interests is worth the additional cost in blood and treasure after all these many years.

The road in Iraq has been long and extraordinarily costly. Just 3 years ago, the debate about the war was about how to mitigate the worst consequences of possible defeat. With the dramatic changes since then, however, we can legitimately discuss the extraordinary opportunity to see a stable, secure, prosperous, and imperfectly democratic Iraq emerge in the Middle East. Now is not the time for America's commitment to that outcome to waver.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Fontaine follows:]

CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

Preserving Progress: Transitioning Authority and Implementing the Strategic Framework Agreement
Prepared Statement of Richard Fontaine

Center for a New American Security

June 23, 2011

Testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia

Prepared Statement of Richard Fontaine
Senior Advisor and Senior Fellow, Center for a New American Security

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Ackerman, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the privilege of testifying today. It is an honor to be here.

It is a particularly timely moment to review the upcoming transition in Iraq and the proper long-term relationship between the United States and Iraq. Though America's mission today garners little attention from a public understandably preoccupied by the domestic economy, wars in Afghanistan and Libya, and other matters, 2011 nevertheless remains a pivotal year in Iraq. Under the terms of the existing security agreement, all American troops are due to depart Iraq by December 31, leaving the remainder of the mission to the Department of State. This transition, combined with the ongoing flux in Iraqi domestic politics, will play a key role in shaping events in Iraq – and in the region – for years to come.

To understand why this is so, it is important to recall Iraq's strategic importance.

Iraq is a major player in the Middle East and will serve as a force for regional stability – or instability – in the future. Since the Gulf War some twenty years ago, Iraq has fostered instability, first because of Saddam Hussein's aggression, and then because of the chaos that followed the U.S. invasion in 2003. Throughout this period, Iraq has at various points served as a locus of regional competition, an arena for Iranian influence, a home for al Qaeda, the venue for an emerging democracy, and a representative of both the hopes and fears of millions across the Arab world. After all of this turmoil, Iraq now has the potential to anchor stability in a region of critical importance to the United States.

American interests in a successful Iraq go beyond stability. With the world's third largest oil reserves, and the potential for significant increases in oil production in the next several years, Iraq will play a key role in supplying the energy upon which the global economy depends. As an imperfect democracy, the success of Iraqi politics could have an important demonstration effect in countries struggling with their own political futures following the Arab spring. As the first country in which an Arab population turned its guns on al Qaeda, Iraq can remain an important U.S. partner in counterterrorism. As a counterweight to Iran, Iraq can help forestall Tehran's continued ambitions for regional dominance. And in light of the many years of blood and toil our nation has spent in pursuit of success in Iraq, finally achieving that success would redound to America's credibility in the region and beyond.

The converse is also the case. An Iraq that returns to chaos and upheaval would quickly revert to a sanctuary for al Qaeda in Iraq, and see the reemergence of sectarian militias. It would invite further Iranian meddling and impose tremendous human costs on the Iraqi people. It would disrupt the supply of oil, with obvious reverberations in global energy markets. And it would strengthen the hand of those who argue that only strongmen, and not democratic governance, can hold together fractious Arab states.

In short, the United States has a vital interest in the emergence of a stable, sovereign, prosperous and democratic Iraq. Nearly everything we are trying to achieve in the Middle East is made easier with it; nearly everything is made more difficult without it. As a result, now is the time to define a long term commitment to Iraq, one that will help extend the real but fragile political, economic and security gains, and that will do so at acceptable cost to the United States.

We can secure our interests in Iraq with far less personnel and resources than we have expended in the past. But we cannot secure them without any personnel and resources, and achieving our national aims will be difficult should all American troops depart by the end of the year, as the existing security agreement mandates. Nearly every Iraqi political leader of stature acknowledges privately that American forces should stay, and American officials have expressed their openness to a continued military role in Iraq. This would not represent an open-ended military and financial commitment; given its increased oil revenue, for instance, projections show that Iraq will be able to fund its own military after 2014. There is light at the end of the fiscal tunnel.

The reasons for a continued military presence are fairly straightforward: the U.S. military continues to play a significant role in supporting the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and guaranteeing internal stability. The ISF currently boasts some 650,000 personnel but suffers from serious gaps in capabilities and effectiveness. The ISF has understandably focused on internal security, and it is only now acquiring the systems it needs to defend the country's borders. Currently the Iraqi air force cannot patrol the country's airspace, and the navy cannot defend its waters, including its oil platforms. While the dangers of external invasion are remote, Iraq's inability to maintain external defense renders it more vulnerable to coercive diplomacy and outside interference than it would otherwise be. The U.S. military also continues to fill important support roles in assisting the ISF with intelligence, training, logistics and maintenance, all of which are critical to the ability of the ISF to conduct operations against internal threats, including al Qaeda and Shia militias, both of which remain active.

Critically, the U.S. military has organized the Combined Security Mechanisms (CSMs), in which American, Kurdish, and Arab troops work together at checkpoints along the disputed border areas of Iraq's northern provinces. In the past, the presence of U.S. troops has been critical to preventing eruptions of hostilities between Arab and Kurdish security forces. The existing Arab-

Kurd tensions in the north, particularly in and around Kirkuk, are a potential powder keg that shows no signs of being resolved in the near future. As a recent Senate Foreign Relations Committee report noted, "the U.S. military presence is the glue that holds together nascent cooperation between the Iraqi army and Kurdish peshmerga. Without U.S. troops to resolve disputes and foster relations, the situation could deteriorate, leaving the country with two separate heavily armed security forces at odds over contentious political issues." The State Department and its contractors cannot maintain this role without military support, calling the future of the CSMs and peace along the disputed boundary into serious question.

Continuing a limited American troop presence for several years is clearly the optimal outcome as the closing days of 2011 loom. This, however, would require a new security agreement with the government of Iraq that supersedes the existing accord. And while Iraqi politicians privately express their desire for just such a pact, it is unclear whether they will step forward publicly and absorb thereby the political backlash that such a decision will generate in segments of the Iraqi population that strongly oppose the U.S. presence. Prime Minister Maliki has insisted that any new agreement would require ratification by the Iraqi parliament, which includes Moktada al Sadr's 40-seat bloc. The Sadrists vociferously oppose any such extension and may have the ability to bring down the government.

The United States should continue to unambiguously signal to the Iraqi leadership its willingness to secure a follow-on agreement that would permit American troops to remain in Iraq after 2011. But it must also be willing to accept that an Iraqi response, should it come, will generate lengthy and messy negotiations. Indeed, it is entirely conceivable that an Iraqi request for a continued American presence could come *after* December 31. American officials will need to exhibit significant patience and creativity throughout this process.

Should attempts to secure a follow-on agreement fail, however, the transition to full State Department lead must take place as scheduled. It is worth noting just how monumental will be the Department's responsibilities in Iraq. As the Foreign Relations Committee has inventoried, the State Department will employ up to 17,000 people in managing 15 different sites, 3 air hubs, 3 police training center, 2 consulates, 2 embassy branch offices, and 5 Office of Security Cooperation sites. State Department contractors will fly helicopters, drive MRAPs, medevac wounded personnel, dispose of explosive ordinance, conduct counter rocket, artillery, and mortar notification, and carry out aerial surveillance. This is unprecedented in the history of the U.S. Department of State, and we should expect significant challenges as the Department implements this ambitious program.

The Department will also have a key diplomatic role. The continued terrorist and militia attacks do not pose a threat to the existence of the Iraqi state, as they did several years ago. The

existential threat to the Iraqi state today stems not from insurgents, but from politicians. Several years ago, counterinsurgency experts argued correctly that security in Iraq was the precondition for political and economic activity. Today it is more precise to say that stable politics is the precondition for security. America's diplomats will continue to have a vital role in maximizing their leverage, within democratic constraints, to urge Iraqi politicians to make decisions with the interest of the country in mind, rather than faction or personality.

There is, I believe, a role for America's political leadership as well. The American public is war-weary and focused on domestic issues. Today we witness calls for withdrawal from Afghanistan and for defunding military operations in Libya. Iraq has become the forgotten war, and with this has come the impression among many that the fight is over. But the mission continues, and it is incumbent on the President and other national leaders to articulate for Congress and the American people the stakes in Iraq, our strategic interests there, and why securing those interests is worth the additional cost in blood and treasure.

The road in Iraq has been long and extraordinarily costly. Just three years ago, the debate about the war was about how to mitigate the worst consequences of possible defeat. With the dramatic changes since then, we can legitimately discuss the extraordinary opportunity to see a stable, secure, prosperous and imperfectly democratic Iraq emerge in the Middle East. Now is not the time for America's commitment to that outcome to waver.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much.

Ms. Cochrane Sullivan, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF MS. MARISA COCHRANE SULLIVAN, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF WAR

Ms. COCHRANE SULLIVAN. Thank you, Chairman Chabot, Representative Ackerman, and distinguished committee members, thank you for holding this hearing and inviting me before you today to testify.

Today I would like to highlight some remaining challenges discussed in greater detail in my prepared statement and why these issues are more important to our engagement in Iraq and work to extend the presence of U.S. forces beyond 2011. But before I do so, I think it is useful to say why Iraq matters to the United States.

The United States has important and enduring national security interests in Iraq. As my colleagues have mentioned, Iraq is a pivotal state at the crossroads of the Middle East. And for the first time in decades, it can play a stabilizing, not destabilizing, role in an increasingly turbulent region.

Iraq has vast oil and natural gas reserves, which if properly stewarded over the next decade could make Iraq the economic powerhouse of the Middle East and greatly increase the world's energy supply.

Iraq's military has built close ties with the U.S. military. And its counterterrorism forces are some of the best in the region. This makes Iraq an important ally in the fight against terrorist groups.

A strong U.S. partnership with Iraq is an important counterweight to growing Iranian regional ambitions. There is no doubt that Iran will seek to fill the political, economic, and security vacuum left in Iraq should the United States completely withdraw its forces.

And, lastly, within the context of the Arab Spring, Iraq is an important test of President Obama's stated commitment to supporting democratic transitions in the Middle East. President Obama laid out his objectives shortly after taking office. He called for the United States to work to promote an Iraq that is sovereign, stable, and self-reliant with a government that is just, representative, and accountable, and that provides neither support nor safe haven to terrorists. We have made substantial progress toward achieving these objectives. But our work is not yet done in Iraq.

On the political side, there are two key challenges that I see. First, Iraq's Government is fragile, deeply divided, and characterized by mistrust. The concept of a national partnership government advocated by the Obama administration has proved flawed. Though the size of the government and many positions were created to satisfy Iraqi politicians, many of these positions are ill-defined. And some are extra-constitutional.

The process of government formation focused more on dividing spoils, rather than on sharing power. It added more seats at the table without addressing the underlying disagreements between parties, making consensus even more difficult to achieve.

Not surprisingly, Iraq's Government has made little meaningful progress on security, economic, or political issues since its formation in December 2010.

Second, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's centralization of power has prompted real concerns for Iraq's democratic transition and rule of law. Prime Minister Maliki now has unprecedented control over Iraq's security forces.

Not only is he the commander in chief of the armed forces, but he has been serving as the acting Minister of Defense, acting Minister of Interior, and Minister of Intelligence for more than 6 months. In recent months, there have been a growing number of cases where security forces controlled by the prime minister have been used to suppress dissent and target political opponents.

There are also three key security challenges: Al-Qaeda in Iraq and other Sunni groups, though significantly degraded, are still able to conduct attacks and undermining the Iraqi Government. And Iranian backed Shia militia groups are growing increasingly active in central and southern Iraq. In recent months, they have stepped up their attacks against U.S. forces as well as Iraqi Government and security officials.

Lastly, Iraqi's security forces still lack capabilities required for Iraq's external defense. But it is precisely because of these many challenges and the importance of Iraq that we must work to extend the U.S. troop presence and enhance our diplomatic engagement.

Our experience in Iraq has shown that progress comes through increased engagement of which an enduring troop presence is a critical part. American forces are still an important check on political violence and terrorism.

In addition to providing the necessary training, U.S. troops also bolster the professionalism of the Iraqi security forces, thereby safeguarding Iraq's democratic process. An extension of a small number of U.S. forces can also help ensure that our diplomats can do their work without costing as much as a contracted security force.

An extended military presence will require a new security agreement. And this will not be easy. It will entail extensive negotiations to build consensus for an agreement.

U.S. officials have maintained that no negotiations can begin until Iraq formally asks for an extension. This posture inadvertently reduces the likelihood of an agreement because it will not prompt timely action by the Iraqis. The United States must fulfill its leadership responsibilities by guiding the discussion of the security agreement renegotiation.

Progress is possible in Iraq. In 2006, most people thought Iraq was lost, but it was pulled back from the brink, thanks to the determined efforts of our military forces and the able work of our diplomats. Their efforts help stabilize Iraq and pave the way for successful elections in 2009 and 2010. It is, therefore, important to consolidate these gains that have come at such a cost.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Cochrane Sullivan follows:]

TESTIMONY OF

MARISA COCHRANE SULLIVAN
DEPUTY DIRECTOR, INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF WAR

BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
JUNE 23, 2011

Introduction

The United States has important and enduring national security interests in Iraq. First, Iraq is a pivotal state that lies at the crossroads of the Middle East. A pariah state during the regime of Saddam Hussein, Iraq has for the first time an opportunity to play a stabilizing role in a historically turbulent region. This comes as Iraq's neighbors such as Syria grow increasingly unstable. Second, Iraq has vast oil and natural gas reserves. If these resources are properly stewarded over the next decade, Iraq could challenge Saudi Arabia as the world's top oil producer, making it the economic powerhouse of the region. Third, Iraq's military has built close ties with the U.S. military and its counterterrorism forces are some of the best in the region. This makes Iraq an important ally in the fight against terrorist groups. Fourth, a strong U.S. partnership with Iraq is an important counterweight to growing Iranian regional ambitions. There is no doubt that Iran will seek to fill the political, economic, and security vacuum left in Iraq should the United States completely withdraw its forces. Lastly, within the context of the Arab Spring, Iraq is an important test of President Obama's stated commitment to supporting democratic transitions in the Middle East.

President Obama laid out his objectives for Iraq in his 2009 speech at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. He called for the United States to work to promote an Iraq that is sovereign, stable, and self-reliant with a government that is just, representative, and accountable, and that provides neither support nor safe-haven to terrorists. It is possible, and indeed necessary, to achieve these objectives in Iraq. Iraq has made substantial progress in the last five years. Security has improved dramatically since the height of the insurgency in 2006 and 2007. Since that time, Iraqis have come to understand that the best way to seek change is through politics not violence. The 2010 parliamentary elections were widely recognized by the international community as free and fair, as more than twelve million Iraqis cast a ballot in the vote. These improvements are a testament to the hard work and sacrifices of our U.S. military forces and their Iraqi counterparts.

Despite significant gains, the president's objectives are not yet fully realized. Important work remains and it will require a small, focused, and continued U.S. troop presence beyond 2011. Our experience in Iraq has shown that progress comes through increased engagement, of which an enduring troop presence is a critical part. Therefore, we must renew and deepen our commitment to Iraq to consolidate the gains that have come at such a high cost.

American forces are still an important check on political violence and terrorism. Today, Iraq's government is fragile, deeply divided, and characterized by mistrust. Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's centralization of power has prompted real concerns for Iraq's democratic transition and rule of law. Despite security improvements, there is still an active al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) presence that seeks to overthrow the government of Iraq. AQI continues its sporadic attacks aimed at undermining the Iraqi government's credibility in the eyes of an increasingly frustrated citizenry. Both Sunni and Shi'a extremists groups are also conducting a widespread assassination campaign against government and security officials by using silenced weapons and so-called "sticky bombs." Recently, Iranian-backed Shi'a militia groups have stepped up their attacks against U.S. forces. The month of June has already seen the highest number of U.S. casualties in two years. The resurgence of Iranian-backed groups is also intended to safeguard Iran's interests in Iraq by influencing Iraqi government and security officials through force as well as persuasion. The Iraqi Security Forces are capable of maintaining internal security, but they still lack the capabilities required to protect Iraq's external defense. Thus, Iraq's forces will require continued training and assistance, particularly in external defense capabilities such as logistics, intelligence, and control of their airspace post-2011.

Continued and robust U.S. political and military engagement this year and beyond is vital to achieve President Obama's stated objectives. Proactive and nuanced diplomatic, political, and economic engagement led by the U.S. Embassy-Baghdad is paramount. The State Department's footprint in Iraq is shrinking, not expanding as it should be, in part due to funding constraints. U.S. diplomats must retain the situational awareness and freedom of movement they require post-2011, given this reduced footprint and the risk aversion of a diplomatic security corps that will be heavily reliant on contractors. An extension of a small number of U.S. forces can help ensure that our diplomats can do their work, without costing as much as a contracted security force.

A continued U.S. troop presence in Iraq beyond 2011 is also required to advance our national security interests and meet our objectives in Iraq. U.S. forces can play an important role in bolstering Iraq's democratic process and the professionalization of the Iraqi Security Forces, in addition to providing necessary training. These roles will diminish over time, but they are nevertheless important and required in the short-term. The size and scope of the military presence need not be as high as current levels, but it must be capabilities-based.

An extended military presence will require a new Security Agreement. Domestic political realities make it unlikely that Iraq's leaders will initiate negotiations. The United States must fulfill its leadership responsibilities by guiding the discussion of the Security Agreement renegotiation. This will take persistent, delicate, and creative diplomacy by the United States, the time for which is running out.

Politics in Iraq

In March 2010, Iraq held its second parliamentary election under the current constitution. Four main electoral coalitions contested the election: the Iraqiyya List, a predominantly Sunni coalition led by Ayad Allawi, a secular Shi'a politician; the State of Law Coalition (SLC), a predominantly Shi'a bloc led by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and dominated by his Dawa party; the Iraqi National Alliance (INA), a predominantly Shi'a coalition comprised mainly of the Sadrist Trend and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI); and the Kurdistan Alliance,

the main Kurdish coalition comprised of the two predominant parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). As the election approached, two lists emerged as the main frontrunners—Maliki's State of Law Coalition and Allawi's Iraqiyya List—and they entered the vote in a tight race. More than twelve million Iraqis voted in the election, which was deemed a success and recognized widely as free and fair.

The results of the election were notably close. Iraqiyya came in first, with ninety-one parliamentary seats, just two seats ahead of State of Law, which came in second and won eighty-nine seats. The INA placed third, with seventy seats. The Kurdish parties garnered a total of fifty-seven seats. Not surprisingly, the results were split along ethno-sectarian lines: Iraqiyya performed very well in the predominantly-Sunni areas of Baghdad and in northern and western Iraq; the Kurds had a strong showing in the Kurdistan Regional Government, where turnout was higher than in most places; and the SLC and INA won the vast majority of seats in southern Iraq and the Shi'a areas of Baghdad. Yet, no single list won a majority of seats or garnered even close to the 163 seats needed for a parliamentary majority. This set the stage for extensive negotiations between electoral coalitions in order to secure the seats needed to form a ruling coalition.

The negotiations to form a government lasted nearly nine months, in what become a debate over how to divide the spoils rather than how to share power. Maliki and Allawi competed fiercely for the biggest prize, the premiership. Maliki ultimately won U.S. backing for a second term as prime minister, but it was the support of the Iranians that proved most instrumental in retaining his position. Iran recognizes the importance of Iraq and has stepped up its political, economic, security, and diplomatic efforts in Iraq. The Iranians exerted heavy pressure on the Sadrist Trend to back Maliki during government formation. It was only after the Sadrists broke for Maliki that other parties threw their support behind the SLC head.

In an effort to resolve the impasse, the Obama administration advocated a "national partnership government," where all of Iraq's parties would be represented in the government. The concept of a national partnership government has proved to be deeply flawed. It bloated the size of the government, as positions were created at random to satisfy Iraqi politicians. There are now three vice presidents, three deputy prime ministers, and more than forty ministers—some without portfolios. Many positions are ill-defined, while others are extra-constitutional. To satisfy Allawi, for example, U.S. officials proposed the creation of a National Council for Higher Policies (NCHP), a body that was envisioned to have some executive power over national security affairs. Yet, a constitutional amendment is required if the NCHP is to have such authorities, a virtual guarantee that it will not be established as envisioned. To date, no progress has been made on establishing the NCHP, despite promises to establish the body by the end of January 2011. Iraqiyya feels that despite its first place finish, it has not been given a sufficient role in the government.

By adding more seats at the table without addressing the underlying disagreements between parties, it created a weak and deeply divided government. The current government structure has also made consensus difficult if not impossible to achieve. Not surprisingly, Iraq's government, which was ultimately formed in December 2010 following nine months of contentious negotiations, has not made any meaningful progress on security, economic, or political issues. Nearly six months since the government was seated, Iraq still lacks a Minster of Defense, Minister of Interior, and Minister of Intelligence. Iraq's political parties cannot agree on who should fill these key security positions. The government has been unable to make even modest

reductions in rampant corruption and unemployment or improvements the provision of essential services, such as electricity or clean water. The only key piece of legislation passed by parliament this year was the 2011 budget, which was approved only after extensive and precarious negotiations. It is unlikely that the parliament will make progress on other critical and therefore controversial legislative items this year. The net result is a weak government paralyzed by internal political squabbles. Calls to replace the current national partnership government with a majority government have intensified in recent weeks.

A potential political struggle is at hand. Present ethnic and political tensions can re-erupt into civil war. States that have recently emerged from civil war, such as Iraq, often relapse. Nevertheless, the very presence of U.S. troops in a training and advisory role is an important check on political violence and an important impetus to peaceful resolution of conflict. U.S. forces now play the role as mediator, especially in the disputed areas of northern Iraq. Their continued presence can have the important effect of bolstering confidence in the Iraqi political process. Additionally, the United States must pursue a political strategy that will promote the emergence of a functional, representative government that can meet the needs of its citizens. A representative and accountable Iraqi government will be a force for stability in the region, advancing the U.S. national security interests outlined above.

Prime Minister Maliki's Centralization of Power

Since 2008, there has been an increasing centralization of power in the office of the prime minister. Today, Prime Minister Maliki has unprecedented control over Iraq's security forces. Not only is he the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, but he has since December 2010 been serving as the acting Minister of Defense, Minister of Interior, and Intelligence Minister. Maliki has used these positions to make changes to security personnel, circumventing the requirement to seek parliamentary approval for certain appointments by selecting these individuals in an acting capacity. The prime minister has direct operational control over the security forces in Baghdad through the Baghdad Operations Command, which reports to the Office of the Commander in Chief (OCINC). Prime Minister Maliki has also used OCINC to influence the operations commands elsewhere in Iraq, bypassing the official chain of command.

Other elite security and counter-terrorism units, most notably the Baghdad Brigade, report directly to the prime minister's office. The Baghdad Brigade is charged with securing the Green Zone, but it and other units controlled by the prime minister have been increasingly used to suppress dissent and target political opponents. In the days surrounding the massive February 25th Day of Rage protest, which was modeled on the demonstrations in Egypt and Tunisia, units loyal to Maliki on orders from the Baghdad Operations Command raided the offices of journalists and political parties that were involved in the protests. More than a dozen democracy and human rights activists were also arrested in late May and early June, in an effort to stave off pro-democracy protests planned for the end of Maliki's one-hundred day initiative to improve governance and service provision. On the day of that planned protest, Maliki's Dawa party bused in thousands of its supporters for a pro-government demonstration. The dueling protests turned violent as Maliki's supporters attacked the outnumbered anti-government demonstrators. The Baghdad Brigade and the Counter-Terrorism Bureau have also been implicated in running secret prisons where prisoners are subject to human rights abuses.

These remaining challenges make U.S. diplomatic and military engagement more important than ever to encourage progress in the rule of law and to ensure the continued professionalization of Iraq's security forces.

The Case for Extending the Security Agreement

The Security Agreement, which provides the legal basis for the U.S. military presence in Iraq, is set to expire at the end of 2011. Although Iraq has achieved significant progress in maintaining internal security, it still has important external defense deficiencies that will continue well beyond 2011. Moreover, Iraq's unresolved political disagreements will also persist and threaten stability. A small but continued presence of U.S. troops will mitigate these destabilizing factors. The national security interests of the United States and Iraq require an extension of a Security Agreement to permit U.S. forces to remain in Iraq in a training capacity.

Political realities in Iraq complicate the debate over an extension. At present, Iraqi political leaders are unwilling to take the lead on renegotiating an agreement, even if many of them privately favor a continuation of the U.S. troop presence. Prime Minister Maliki's political reliance on the anti-American Sadrist Trend and Iran's sponsorship, along with the pressure from the rival Iraqiyya bloc, has effectively limited his ability to act decisively in the Security Agreement debate. He instead seeks to divert responsibility for a renewal to his political rivals by maintaining that the Iraqi parliament is responsible for any decision. Other blocs, such as Iraqiyya, want Maliki to have responsibility for the negotiations as commander-in-chief. Osama al-Nujaifi, the speaker of the Council of Representatives, has asserted that the parliament's role will be limited to an up-or-down vote on any negotiated agreement. Prime Minister Maliki announced in early May 2011 that he would bring all of Iraq's parties together to initiate a more formal discussion on whether to renegotiate an agreement, but this meeting has yet to occur. The fragmentation amongst the blocs and increasingly hostile rhetoric between Iraqiyya and State of Law will make it more difficult to reach a consensus in favor of renewal.

These realities will require extensive negotiations amongst Iraq's various political parties, and between U.S. and Iraqi officials. As is often the case in Iraq, these negotiations will likely unfold over an extended period, but time is running short. The Obama administration has recognized that it is in U.S. interests to keep a small contingent of U.S. troops in Iraq beyond 2011. Yet, U.S. officials have maintained that no negotiations can begin until Iraq formally asks for an extension. This posture inadvertently reduces the likelihood of an agreement because it will not prompt timely action from the Iraqis.

United States needs to assume a more proactive and leading role to engage Iraq's leaders and articulate the importance of an extended troop presence in Iraq. U.S. officials should adopt an integrated and bottom-up approach that builds confidence and consensus amongst Iraq's various political blocs.

It is important to frame the benefits of U.S. engagement as a way of laying the foundations for a future prosperous Iraq that plays a leading role in the region, rather than being weaker than its neighbors and subject to their whims. An extended U.S. presence can allow for the development of conditions that will bolster Iraq's autonomy and sovereignty. Iraq's foreign policy and domestic politics will be more constrained by the influence and interests of other regional actors, such as Iran, without a sufficient external defense capability. Sustained U.S. engagement can

help facilitate advancements on Iraq's political impasses and continuing security disparities, thereby suitably hastening the potential for its oil and gas reserves to translate Iraq into an influential economic power.

It is important for the United States to garner support from Iraq's other neighbors and utilize their influence and interests in Iraq. U.S. officials should better engage regional states, such as Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and other Gulf states. These countries have a shared interest in maintaining a U.S. presence in Iraq to check Iran's growing influence and maintain stability in the country. These states also have leverage over key individuals and constituencies in Iraqiyya, which could help to mobilize them to favor a new Security Agreement.

The experience in negotiating the current Security Agreement, as well as the process of government formation demonstrate that agreements are best made through private, lengthy discussions that unfold over an extended period of time. Public statements by senior U.S. officials must be carefully gauged so that they are not manipulated by elements that seek to prevent a continued U.S. presence, particularly the Sadrists.

The revised engagement strategy outlined above will not guarantee an extended troop presence, but it offers the best chance for doing so.

Conclusion

Though Iraq has faded from the headlines, its importance to U.S. national security interests remains. The Arab Spring that has swept across the Middle East has brought great opportunity but great uncertainty to the region. Iraq stands poised to play a pivotal role as an important U.S. ally. The last few years have seen progress in Iraq that many believed was not possible in 2007. This was the result of an exceptional effort and sacrifice by U.S. military forces and their civilian counterparts. It is also a testament to the commitment of the Iraqis, who have also sacrificed their blood and treasure to defeat a common enemy and to achieve shared objectives. Today, many of our shared goals are within reach. However, there is still important work to be done to continue the training and professionalization of the Iraqi Security Forces, to advance the rule of law and protect Iraq's democratic transition, to counter growing malign Iranian influence in Iraq, to support Iraq's newly-formed and still fragile government, to overcome the mistrust and divisions that have stemmed from decades of conflict, to ensure that Iraq realizes its economic potential, and to prevent Iraq from returning to civil war and further destabilizing an already uncertain region. It is, therefore, vitally important to have a meaningful military and political presence beyond this year.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much. I want to thank all of the panel. We will now go into the questioning by the members up here, and we will each get 5 minutes as well. Mr. Fontaine, I will begin with you if I can.

In your testimony, you stated that the planned State Department-led operation is "unprecedented in the history of the U.S. Department of State. And we should expect significant challenges as the Department implements this ambitious program."

My question would be, does the State Department have the requisite skill set to undertake a mission of this size and nature to ensure that the gains already made in Iraq are not lost?

And, just to mention this, I have been to Iraq three times, most recently about 1 month ago. And, you know, we were told there were 47,000 I believe boots on the ground still then, I think under 50,000 security civilian personnel. And by the end of the year, they are supposed to be down from a high of 170,000. We are now at

47,000 down to 157. And it was just pretty amazing. And I don't think anybody expects that that is going to be it. Unless we reach some agreement, that is where we are supposed to be down to.

So I would love to have your comments.

Mr. FONTAINE. Well, first of all, there are things that the State Department and its contractors will not be able to do when the military is gone. So some of the checkpoints, for example, along the border between the Kurdish provinces and the Arab provinces, those have been manned by American security forces. It is inconceivable that either State Department or contractors are going to be there for that. So there is a sector of activity that just cannot be done if the military is not there.

For the stuff where we would find work-arounds or put contractors on it, one of the key aspects of this is the State Department's ability to manage those contractors. The Department of Defense has learned a lot since 2001 and 2003 in managing its contractors on the battlefield. And it still has some pretty significant problems of capacity.

The State Department is in a much bigger hole that it is trying to dig out of. Contract management has never been in the core competency of the U.S. Department of State. The Commission on Wartime Contracting, SIGR and various other reports have documented some of the problems State Department is having in trying to ramp up so they can manage maybe 14,000 contractors once it gets into Iraq. And that is going to be a very, very difficult thing for them to do.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much.

Mr. Boot, if I could go to you next? You stated in your testimony that you are "skeptical that any agreement can be reached by December 31st if the U.S. or Iraqi Governments insist on submitting it for ratification." What alternatives are there? And what do you actually expect to happen here?

Mr. BOOT. I don't think there is any obligation for the Government of Iraq to submit an agreement for ratification to their own Parliament, that is something that Maliki may want to do to provide political topcoat for himself, but, you know, I mean, most of our status of force agreements around the world are not ratified by legislatures.

Most of them are not even public. They are government-to-government deals, which is certainly within the realm of legal possibility here. The question is whether it is in the realm of political possibility. And I think we need to push for that if we are going to get a deal done.

Another possibility would be to do some kind of interim deal, maybe for a year or 2, that would be basically a stop-gap measure so we wouldn't have to pull every last trooper out on December 31 and then take more time in order to negotiate a broader deal that might, in fact, be ratified by the Iraqi Parliament.

But if we are going to expect the Iraqi Parliament to act by December 31, my prediction is we are going to be disappointed.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you.

I have only got 1 minute and 20 seconds here. Ms. Sullivan, I will go to you last here. And I will get back to you on the second

round, which we will probably get a second round since we don't have a huge number of members here this afternoon.

In your testimony, you suggested that the United States needs to assume a more proactive and leading role to engage Iraq's leaders and articulate the importance of an extended troop presence in Iraq. U.S. officials should adapt an integrated and bottom-up approach that builds confidence and consensus among Iraq's various political blocks.

What specifically should Congress and the administration be doing to achieve this end?

Ms. COCHRANE SULLIVAN. There are a couple of things quickly. And then we are running out of time. While Maliki is important to the agreement, it is unlikely that he is going to act on his own given the political realities in Iraq.

So it is very important for U.S. diplomats and U.S. officials to not just engage with him but engage with the other power brokers in Iraq so that they can also come to a consensus and that Maliki knows that he has broader backing for an agreement so that if he is going to take this political risk, he is doing it knowing he has got some backing.

I think the other thing, too, is that the Iraqis need to understand, it needs to be communicated by the Obama administration and by Congress that the United States does care about Iraq, that Iraq matters and it matters at the highest levels, too.

So thank you.

Mr. CHABOT. Okay. Thank you very much. My time has expired.

The gentleman from New York, the ranking member, Mr. Ackerman, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ACKERMAN. This panel has done a terrible thing keeping exactly within their time constraints, setting us an example.

It seems to me that looking at this, it is like a bad movie about a terrible marriage in which, you know, she is throwing him out but needs him to stay and he's insisting on leaving, "But please beg me to remain" kind of thing and then trying to figure out what to do. "I am going to keep this together for the sake of the kids," who will grow up to be dysfunctional anyway.

I have noticed sometimes when you drive along the highway or even pull into the airport there is a police car that you see up ahead on the side. And it is not until you are passing it you realize there is nobody in it, but everybody slows down. And it serves a great function.

Is that what we are doing in Iraq, pulling out the troops but staying there? Do they need our sense of presence more than our presence? Mr. Eisenstadt?

Mr. EISENSTADT. Yes. If I could, you know, to answer that question, we have talked about—some numbers have been thrown out in terms of the number of troops that maybe would be desirable to be there. But except for the counterterrorism forces that we have there and the forces around Kirkuk and disputed internal boundaries areas, I think our presence is merely of symbolic importance.

And I think the numbers are less important than the very fact that we are willing to have people on the ground there after the end of this year as a demonstration, a tangible demonstration, of

our commitment to the stability of the Iraqi Government and the continuation of democratic governance there.

So let me just say I think it is very important that we show our willingness to continue to stay, but I think senior officials, such as the Secretary of Defense and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, have already laid this marker down.

And I would argue that, in the Middle Eastern market, just like in romance, it is best not to show too much interest, at least publicly and openly. When you go into a store in the market, if you show too much interest in the vendor's wares, he knows he has you over a barrel. And he will get a favorable deal from his point of view.

So I would argue that it is best not to on a public level show too much enthusiasm and also from the point of view of Iraqi politics. And making it easier for Maliki to make the sale, I would argue that it is best that we not show too much public interest and we work with our partners in Iraq, especially the members of the Iraqi Security Forces, to help them to make the arguments they need to make to their politicians for why the United States needs to stay beyond the end of the year and let them for the most part, for the most part, do the carrying of the water.

Mr. BOOT. Could I just add one thing to what Michael just said,——

Mr. ACKERMAN. Sure.

Mr. BOOT [continuing]. Which is that, I mean, I largely agree with him that it is primarily of symbolic importance that we stayed, but there are real issues of troop size and capability because Iraq is still a dangerous place. We were reminded of that recently when six American soldiers lost their lives at a base in Baghdad when they were shelled by the special groups.

We know that the Iranians and their proxies are going to come after our forces. They want to create a Lebanon-like situation where they can create the perception that they had driven us out like the Israelis were driven out of Lebanon. They want to create American casualties and keep that in the headlines.

And so we have to make sure that we don't send such a small force that it is unable to defend itself. And that is one of my concerns about the State Department and their contractors.

I don't know if they are going to be able to defend themselves. I am concerned that they would have to hunker down in Baghdad and not be able to get out in the country, not be able to keep their presence.

And so whatever force we send has to be large enough to be self-sustaining, including the security realm. And that is why I am saying maybe closer to 20,000, but 10,000 is fine. But just we have to be careful not to make it too small.

Mr. ACKERMAN. There's no way we can make an argument or anybody can really say that we are at war there?

Mr. BOOT. I think it is primarily a peacekeeping role, but even peacekeepers have to be able to defend themselves against terrorist attacks.

Mr. ACKERMAN. It seems to me some time ago Iraq was something that we conjured up and it morphed from something else ba-

sically to stand up to Iran. Is there a chance that they are going to continue doing that?

Mr. EISENSTADT. Well, the relationship with Iran is very complex. And I think it would be unhelpful at this point to try to push them to stand up to Iran. Right now, you know, they lack, I think, the confidence and the ability, both in terms of their military capabilities, in terms of the robustness of their economy to do so.

I think, though, if you look at the polling data, by and large, there still is a very strong sense of Iraqi national identity and great distrust of Iran. I think that will come naturally on its own. There is no need for us to go in that direction.

Mr. ACKERMAN. So we are leading, and we don't like that they are flirting with someone else?

Mr. EISENSTADT. Well, they are going to flirt. The fact of the matter is Iran is their neighbor, and they are going to play footsie. And they are going to have a relationship.

You know, the key political parties have longstanding ties. There are economic relations that are going to continue. And there is a religious influence. That is going to continue. But I think they would prefer to have the United States to ply off against Iran. And we should be ready to fill that role.

If I could just add on the point that Max made, we are in agreement, I think. I said we need to have a very robust counterterrorism capability there to provide force protection to go after the bad guys, so no doubt about that. You need to have a very robust capability in that area.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CHABOT. The gentleman's time has expired.

Having just celebrated, my wife and I, our 38th anniversary yesterday, I want to thank the gentlemen for their advice on marriage and flirting and footsie and the rest here. I never thought we would get into that on Iraq, but we celebrated, by the way, 600 miles from each other because she is back in Cincinnati. I am in Washington.

That being as it may, we will recognize the gentleman from New York, Mr. Higgins, for 5 minutes.

Mr. HIGGINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Continuing with this theme of flirtation, you know, I have been to the region several and I always walk away with a similar feeling. And that is that the Americans get played.

There is a discussion that goes on when the Americans are in the room and a discussion that goes on when the Americans are out of the room.

This constant flirtation with Iran is disturbing to me. And this whole 8 years in Iraq, it seems like the goalposts are always being moved.

Remember when the surge was called for in November 2007, it was done for a specific purpose. And that was to try to tamp down violence with additional troops but also changing the way the troops were used, leaving them out of forward operating bases into the neighborhoods, trying to have respectful relations with the communities so as to make, really, the insurgency irrelevant.

Militarily the surge worked. Violence was considerably tamped down. But the political settlement that was supposed to come with that, that breathing space, to allow the various factions, the Shia,

the Kurds, and the Sunnis, to resolve their differences relative to the sharing of oil revenues, relative to political reconciliation, relative to disputed areas in the north, like the City of Kirkuk, that hasn't occurred.

And, you know, my sense is that we were supposed to have left Iraq this summer. And the Iraqis asked us to stay. And we are staying on until the end of the year at least. And my sense is that this is just a continuing drama that is played out with really no end.

Help me better understand this because I think, as previous speakers have referenced, the American people are tired of this. Members of Congress, both sides, are tired of this. And if there is not a commitment on the part of those who have to provide resources to this effort, this effort cannot be sustained. And my concern is that if we are here for another couple of years in Iraq, that it really won't change much.

Finally, let me just say this. I remember my first trip to Iraq was in the Summer of 2006. And there was an individual there by the name of Ahmad Chalabi. Chalabi was somewhat of a charismatic figure. He was educated in the United States, Ph.D. in mathematics, and just seemingly an anomaly that a lot of people put a lot of confidence in.

Well, eventually Chalabi had alienated the American administration and the American military. And now Chalabi has reemerged in Iraqi politics as a pro-Iranian figure. And this is the situation that we are dealing with here. It doesn't seem as though we are making the kind of political progress with all of those existential political issues that was identified as needing to be resolved in order to make forward progress.

We did our part militarily. We provided that breathing space from which a political settlement could be achieved. The political settlement has not been achieved, and I don't see promising signs that it is going to be achieved any time soon.

So, with that, anybody can take it, but that is mien.

Mr. FONTAINE. Maybe it is not the smart thing to do, but I will take a short. You are right, Congressman, that the search didn't resolve all of the political problems that exist in Iraq, but it did enable a lot of political activity to take place that wasn't taking place before and get Iraq politically to a different place than it was, a much better place.

So, for example, in 2006 and 2007 and even in 2005, political discourse was essentially manifested through the barrel of a gun or an IED or a bomb. So the Sunnis weren't participating in the political system. The Shia death squads were out there fighting.

Now we are actually talking about the problems that are associated with a unity government under Prime Minister Maliki. The Sunnis there are disaffected groups, but the Sunnis have bought into the basic premise of the political system in Iraq. The same thing is true of the Shia. The same thing is true of the Kurds.

That doesn't mean we have a hydrocarbon law. That doesn't mean that we have a solution or Kirkuk because they are going to be continuing and doing problems on the political side in Iraq.

I do think that as those problems get smaller and smaller as the security forces in Iraq get better and better, the American commit-

ment necessary is getting smaller and smaller. So now we are talking about going maybe down to 10,000 troops, instead of even the 47,000 we have there now. And I don't think that those would necessarily need to be there very long term. Even in terms of cost, by 2014, given increased oil revenues, Iraq should be able to pay for its military, which is the first time since 2003.

So I do think that both on the cost side and the resource commitment side by the United States, you will see a downward trend, but it can't be a cliff because if you hit the cliff and the resources the United States is providing go to zero, then those remaining political problems suddenly take on a much bigger character.

Mr. CHABOT. The gentleman's time has expired. We are going to go to a second round now. And I will recognize myself for 5 minutes. Mr. Eisenstadt, as I said, I will go to you next.

In your testimony, you suggested a comprehensive national reconciliation process to stave off domestic tensions. Could you please kind of elaborate on this suggestion? And what issued would be encompassed in this? What can the U.S. do to facilitate this?

Mr. EISENSTADT. Yes. I mean, there are various models that have been practiced in various places around the world. And they often have common elements, such as truth commissions and partial justice for victims and symbolic punishment for perpetrators and the like. I don't see that this is going to happen any time soon in Iraq. I just think it is very important. And I am not sure, actually, whether the U.S. Government should play a lead role in these efforts.

I actually worked these issues when I worked in the Embassy with the U.S. forces headquarters last year in Iraq. And it may be that international and Iraqi NGOs played the lead on this until you have farsighted political leadership, such as an Iraqi Mandela, not to be glib. And really farsighted magnanimous leadership is really a sine qua non for all of these kinds of reconciliation processes. And, you know——

Mr. CHABOT. Can I stop you there for just a second?

Mr. EISENSTADT. Sure, sure.

Mr. CHABOT. No. Go ahead. I will do it later.

Mr. EISENSTADT. And I think, you know, again, it would be desirable to have people have done, kind of have a plan on hand so that if conditions permit 5, 10, 15, or 20 years down the road—and let's keep in mind a lot of national reconciliation processes don't occur right after a country's civil war, though. It usually happens 5 or 10 years down the road. We have a plan in hand. That is all.

Mr. CHABOT. I wanted to let you finish your thought here, but you talked about a dynamic natural leadership figure, somebody like a Mandela or something.

I remember—and this is getting a little off the topic here because we are on Iraq, but Afghanistan is clearly something that is important. And the President just made an important speech last night, some of which I agree with, other things I didn't.

I remember what some folks were saying about Karzai and Afghanistan. You know, he seemed to be—Max, I see you are nodding. So feel free to jump in here. But some people when they first look at him seem to think that perhaps he was that type of figure, didn't seem to be somebody that was corrupt. And his father I be-

lieve had been murdered by the bad guys. And it is kind of an interesting history, but as it turns out, it hasn't gone so well. So you can handle that or, Mr. Boot, if you would like to, I would be interested to hear what you might think about that.

Mr. BOOT. Well, I mean, I share with Michael a desire to have an Iraqi Nelson Mandela or an Iraqi George Washington or Konrad Adenauer, you know, somebody wonderful. I think your comment is a reminder that we shouldn't invest too much in the personal angle. I mean, I remember exactly what they are talking about.

I remember, you know, sitting around in Baghdad around 2007. Everybody was sort of commiserating, saying, "Geez, if only we had a Hamid Karzai in Iraq. Everything would be so wonderful. Why are we dealing with a schmuck like Maliki?"; you know.

And now, of course, Maliki is starting to look pretty good by comparison with Karzai. And, in fact, the two countries in many ways have flipped positions where Afghanistan used to be the success story and Iraq was the basket case. Now it is a little bit more the other way around.

I think there are several lessons we can draw from that. One is that neither failure nor success is perpetual. And something that looks pretty stable now can look not so hot 1 or 2 years down the line if we take our eyes off the ball but also that we shouldn't invest too much in the personal angle.

And we need to build stronger institutions. And I think one of the—it takes a while for that to emerge. And we shouldn't expect that a wonderful person will suddenly take over Iraq and transform it overnight. We really need our stable institutions.

One of the most stable and viable institutions there is the U.S. military. And I think it will be for a number of years to come.

Mr. CHABOT. And I only have a short period of time. So let me ask the panel one other topic here relative to Iran. I mean, I think that is one of the things when people go back. We were in Saudi Arabia recently. And they are, of course, concerned that they are being kind of encircled by Iranian influence.

Iranian influence is growing in the region. And others had argued about Iraq being a buffer against Iran. Does anybody want to comment on just the concept that how the world has changed relative to Iran and what, if anything, at this point—you know, we are 10 years later now. What can be done in 10 seconds to make sure that Iran doesn't continue to flex its muscles in that part of the world?

Ms. COCHRANE SULLIVAN. Well, I think one of the biggest things is recognizing the role that Iraq plays in balancing Iranian influence and having a strong partnership between the United States and Iraq in doing so.

I think that the Iranians would like to have an Iraq that is sympathetic to their interests. I think that Iraq could play an important role for the Iranians in helping to elude sanctions given the economic importance of Iraq.

So I think that Iraq has to be viewed as a central component to any strategy in the region when you are looking at balancing against Iran.

Mr. CHABOT. Okay. Thank you very much. My time has expired.

The gentleman from New York is recognized, the ranking member.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much. Congratulations on your anniversary.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much.

Mr. ACKERMAN. My wife and I celebrated our 44th 3 weeks ago. And she reminded me the only reason we have lasted that long, despite the fact we have been married 44 years, we have only been together 6.

[Laughter.]

Mr. CHABOT. Congratulations.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you. Tough business.

I was listening to the gentleman from New York's very, as usual, astute comments and his recollection of Mr. Chalabi. And it just seems that I would remind us all that in the Middle East, more people seem to have risen from the dead than originally suspected.

I want to go back to the relationship between Iran and Iraq. Instead of just acknowledging that there is a flirtatious relationship and looking at the reasons for why that is happening, it certainly is not in our interest, I think we would all agree, for that to develop in any meaningful way.

What do we do from a strategy point of view to convince the Iraqis that that might be not in their best long-term interest, or should we just sit by and let that develop, which is not something that I believe?

Mr. FONTAINE. Well, Congressman, I think one of the things that we can do as linked to what we have been talking about thus far, the continued American military presence. A number of I think the panelists have noted that Iraq doesn't have the capacity right now to defend its borders without help from the U.S. military.

Now, that is not—we don't fear an Iranian invasion of Iraq, but to the extent to which Iran feels like it has a free hand in the border areas with Iraq, then that makes coercive diplomacy against Iraq that much more successful. It makes their ability to play interactive politics a little bit easier than it would be otherwise.

So to show the Iraqis that they have alternatives to Iranian pressure, Iranian influence in their politics I think would be a good starting point and a good way for the United States to think about one aspect of its continued role there.

Mr. EISENSTADT. If I could just add to that? My comment about the American business trade and investment in Iraq, in part, was directed toward strengthening the Iraqi economy so that there wasn't this kind of uneven dependent relationship where the Iraqi economy is weak and vulnerable, in part, because of policies that the Iranian Government is pursuing in terms of dumping subsidized agricultural products and consumer goods and the like.

Now, we have to realize and recognize there is always going to be trade between Iran and Iraq because of proximity, because of certain things that Iran produces meets the needs of Iraq's consumer markets in a way that we can't. But we need to build up to the degree that we can Iraq's economy, particularly the oil and defense sector. Let me just also say—and that will enable them to have the strength in order to push back on Iran in the future.

Another thing I think that is vitally important, in talks with people in Iraq in the past, when I asked them, "What is the most effective means of countering Iranian influence?" they say, "Information operations."

And so I would urge that the public diplomacy section of the Embassy in Baghdad be augmented by a military information support team. We have military information support teams in Embassies throughout the region and in other parts of the world.

I don't know what the plans are right now. I don't believe there is one there yet. And I think it would be very desirable for the public diplomacy section to be augmented by military people who are specialized in information operations in order to shed light on how Iran operates in Iraq because, again, there is I think a real appetite for this among the Iraqi public. And I think that is a way of again kind of limiting Iranian influence by showing how they operate and with whom they operate.

Mr. BOOT. Just add one very fast point. Also, I mean, one of the real capabilities that the U.S. military has there is intelligence gathering. So we can just figure out what the Iranians are actually up to. We have great situational awareness with 47,000 human sensors on the ground. And that's one of the things I am really worried about is they are free to climb to zero.

We are not even going to know what the Iranians are up to because it is going to be very hard for the State Department and the CIA and other civilian agencies to fill the gap and the intelligence gathering, which is a prerequisite for effective operations to counter the Iranian influence.

Ms. COCHRANE SULLIVAN. I actually just want to follow up with two quick points on Max's comment. The attacks against U.S. forces in our Embassies has been increasing in recent weeks. And they primarily have been by Iranian backed groups.

Given the risk aversion of the diplomatic security corps, one that is heavily reliant on contractors, I am very concerned that if things start heating up a bit more and the Embassy or consulates are coming under attacks, that they are not going to be getting out when they need to get out most. And they are going to lost the visibility that they need to understand what is happening just beyond the gate.

The other thing, finally, is just the United States is, arguably, one of the only or the only country in the region that actually wants Iraq to flourish, that wants Iraq to be strong. And I think that is a powerful argument, not just on what capabilities Iraq would be losing for the United States leaving but what capabilities it could gain.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CHABOT. The gentleman's time has expired.

I'm sorry. The gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Marino, did you have any questions? No questions? Okay. Well, thank you for coming.

The gentleman from New York is recognized if he would like to ask some more questions for 5 minutes.

Mr. HIGGINS. On the issue of revenues, I think Ms. Sullivan indicated that the Iraqis are going to pay for a security component of this. I apologize, Mr. Fontaine.

Mr. FONTAINE. The projections are that under the augmented oil production that is starting to take place now and that will continue through about 2014, then the projection I believe is that Iraq will able to control its armed forces by 2014.

Now, that is separate from being able to control their air space, for example, because just the length of time it takes to train fighter pilots and so on is longer than that period of time. but in terms of actual financial resources, it should be 2014 is my understanding.

Mr. HIGGINS. Any discussions about their participation in financing to continue the American military presence?

Mr. FONTAINE. I have seen Americans say that. I have not seen any Iraqis say that other than to object strenuously to that idea.

Mr. HIGGINS. I see. In terms of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and his progress with the unity government, any substantial progress relative to the other issues that we have talked about, including sharing of oil revenues, for any of you?

Ms. COCHRANE SULLIVAN. I haven't seen much dialogue on that since the government is formed, although I know it is an issue that particularly the Kurds are going to want to see movement on. But I haven't seen any.

Mr. HIGGINS. Okay. I have no more questions. I yield back.

Mr. CHABOT. Okay. Thank you. The gentleman yields back.

That concludes the questioning by the panel members up here this afternoon. We want to thank the witnesses for their testimony. It has been very helpful for the committee. We appreciate it very much.

And, without objection, members will have 5 days to submit additional statements for the record. If there is no further business to come before the committee, we are adjourned. Thank you very much.

[Whereupon, at 3:21 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

Material Submitted for the Hearing Record

SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia
Steve Chabot (R-OH), Chairman

June 16, 2011

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, to be held in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building **(and available live, via the WEBCAST link on the Committee website at http://www.hcfa.house.gov)**:

DATE: Thursday, June 23, 2011

TIME: 2:00 p.m.

SUBJECT: Preserving Progress: Transitioning Authority and Implementing the Strategic Framework in Iraq, Part 2

WITNESSES: Max Boot
Jeane J. Kirkpatrick Senior Fellow for National Security Studies
Council on Foreign Relations

Michael Eisenstadt
Director, Military & Security Studies Program
The Washington Institute for Near East Policy

Richard Fontaine
Senior Fellow
Center for New American Security

Marisa Cochrane Sullivan
Deputy Director
Institute for the Study of War

By Direction of the Chairman

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON *MESA* HEARING

Day *Thursday* **Date** *June 23* **Room** *2172*

Starting Time *2:15* **Ending Time** *3:20*

Recesses ____ (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____)

Presiding Member(s)

Steve Chabot

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session ☑
Executive (closed) Session ☐
Televised ☑
Electronically Recorded (taped) ☑
Stenographic Record ☑

TITLE OF HEARING:

Preserving Progress: Transitioning Authority and Implementing the Strategic Framework in Iraq, Part 2

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chabot, Ackerman, Higgins, Marino

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: *(Mark with an * if they are not members of full committee.)*

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes ☑ **No** ☐
(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____
or
TIME ADJOURNED _____

_____
Subcommittee Staff Director

The Honorable Steve Chabot, Chairman
Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia

"Preserving Progress: Transitioning Authority and Implementing the Strategic Framework in Iraq, Part 2"
June 23, 2011

I want to welcome all of my colleagues to this hearing of the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia. We are now approximately five months away from the December 31, 2011 deadline when, according to the current Status of Forces Agreement with the Government of Iraq, all U.S. armed forces must leave Iraq. Starting on January 1, 2012 the State Department will take the lead implementing all U.S. policy in Iraq.

Earlier this month, Administration witnesses from the Department of State, Department of Defense, and USAID testified before this Subcommittee about the current plan to transition from a Defense lead to a State lead. Regrettably, their testimony stoked rather than allayed my fears. I recently travelled to Iraq where I was able to see just how critical the work of our military continues to be. In conjunction with their Iraqi partners on the ground, their hard work has helped to set Iraq on the course to becoming a stable, secure, and democratic country that respects human rights.

But even as we celebrate these hard-won gains, we must remember that we're not there yet. Iraq's recent progress is regrettably as precarious as it is positive. We cannot look at where we are today and forget where we were just a few years ago. And although the Administration's transition plan may be well-intentioned, I am concerned that it is neither well-timed nor well-reasoned. Our brave men and women in uniform have fought tirelessly for nearly a decade to get us to where we are today. Thousands of American lives have been lost. Billions of dollars have been spent. The worst possible outcome would be to withdraw our forces before Iraq is ready to stand on its own.

Yet the plans that the Administration has offered to date fall short of what Iraq requires to consolidate these gains. To quote then-Senator Hillary Clinton, it would require a willful suspension of disbelief to believe that Iraq will be where it needs to be for us to withdrawal by December 31st. It also requires a willful suspension of disbelief to believe that the State Department alone—without the help of U.S. military forces on the ground—has the capability to satisfactorily execute this mission.

Numerous challenges lay before us in Iraq. Although the Iraqi Security Forces have progressed by leaps and bounds over the past several years, it is an undeniable fact that our military forces continue to play a vital role on the ground. The Iraqis, despite this progress, lack certain core capabilities like the ability to secure their own airspace. Our continued presence functions as the ultimate guarantor of their security and enables the Iraqi Security Forces to continue to develop.

Not only do our forces secure Iraq from outside threats, but they also alleviate Arab-Kurdish tensions in Iraq's north. Our presence effectively allows Iraq's nascent democratic institutions to continue to develop even as the political system, as I am sure the testimony here will address, continues to experience what we all hope are merely growing pains. And although the U.S. has commitments elsewhere in the world, we must remain dedicated to achieving success Iraq. There can be no question that it is in both the U.S. and Iraq's national interest to see a stable and democratic Iraq emerge that is capable of defending itself. Such an outcome would offer a model to the Arab world at this time of transition. It would stand as definitive evidence that the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are innate human rights and do not stop at the water's edge.

This is our strategic objective and we should do everything in our power to ensure it happens, including if need be by considering an extension of our military presence on the ground. A greater number of Iraqi political and military figures have recently come out in support of extending the deadline to withdrawal but, as could be expected, no one wants to foot the bill. Iraqi domestic politics make it very difficult to outright ask the U.S. to remain in Iraq and, as a result, Iraq's leadership is pointing fingers and passing bucks. Yet despite this difficult situation, the only clear message from the Administration is that we are happy to stay, but the Iraqis must openly ask.

I hope our witnesses today will speak to what we could be doing, which we are not, to help encourage the Iraqis to request a continued U.S. military presence. The situation requires responsible leadership both in the U.S. and Iraq; leadership that can make the right decision even if it is unpopular. Again, it would be a failure of colossal proportions to seize defeat from the jaws of victory and yet that is precisely what I fear may come to pass.

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