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PRESERVING PROGRESS: TRANSITIONING AUTHORITY AND IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK IN IRAQ, PART 1

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESERVING PROGRESS: TRANSITIONING AUTHORITY AND IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK IN IRAQ, PART 1

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 1, 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 2:30 p.m., in room 2172 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Steve Chabot (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. CHABOT. Good afternoon, the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia will come to order.

I want to warn folks that we are probably going to be interrupted by votes here in a relatively short period of time, at which time we will probably be over there for ½ hour to perhaps 40 minutes. But we will come back as quickly as we can. Other members will be coming in, so that they can avoid my opening statement probably, but they will get here.

I want to welcome all of my colleagues to this hearing of the subcommittee. This hearing was called to assess the Obama administration's Iraq policy as we approach the official transition from Department of Defense to the Department of State lead.

June 1 will mark approximately 6 months until all U.S. troops—combat or otherwise—are scheduled to leave Iraq. As of January 1, 2012, it will fall to the State Department to oversee Iraq's continued progress in the implementation of the goals outlined in the Strategic Framework Agreement.

Having just returned from Iraq a little over a week ago, I appreciate how critical the work our military and our State Department does as we continue to carry out the mission there. In conjunction with the Iraqi partners on the ground, they have helped set Iraq on the course to become a stable, secure, and democratic country that respects human rights. But as we look with favor upon these hard-won gains, we must remember that we are not there yet.

Earlier today Baghdad suffered both a car bomb and a roadside bomb, wounding 16 people so far. Iraq's recent progress is, regrettably, as precarious as it is positive. It is far too easy to look at where we are today and forget where we were just several years ago. And although the administration's plan to transition the mission is well intentioned, I am concerned that it is neither well timed nor, unfortunately, well reasoned in a number of areas.

Our brave men and women in uniform have fought tirelessly for over 8 years to get us to where we are today. Thousands of lives have been lost. Billions of dollars have been spent. The worst possible outcome for us today would be to withdraw before Iraq is ready to stand on its own. And there is reason to question Iraq's readiness.

In January 2011, U.S. forces-Iraqi reported to the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction that,

> "The U.S. faces the choice of making additional investments to fill essential gaps in Iraqi security forces, capabilities, or accept the risk that they will fall short of being able to fully secure Iraq from internal and external threats by the time U.S. forces department, in accordance with the security agreement."

Echoing those concerns, Lieutenant General Babakir Zebari, General Chief of Staff of the Iraqi army, acknowledged that the Iraqi army still depends on U.S. forces for the protection of its airspace and borders.

In 2010, as the U.S. was ending its combat mission, Zebari stated that "If I were asked about the withdrawal, I would say to politicians, 'The U.S. Army must stay until the Iraqi army is fully ready in 2020.'"

At its core, the discussion about transition breaks down to two critical questions. Does the State Department have the capability to succeed? And, if not, should the U.S. military remain in Iraq in some meaningful capacity to help consolidate gains? Many in both the U.S. and the Iraqi Government doubt that the Iraqi security forces will be prepared to defend the Iraqi state from internal and external threats by December 2011, just the end of this year.

And although it may be politically expedient, both in the U.S. and in Iraq, to seek withdrawal by that date, it may not be sound strategy. It is an undeniable fact that our military forces continue to play a vital role on the ground in Iraq. By continuing to serve as the guarantor of Iraq's security and stability, we allow its democratic institutions to grow and to mature.

And while there are many conflicts that draw our attention, America and this Congress must remain dedicated to achieving success in Iraq. It is in America's interest, and it is in Iraq's interest, to see a democratic Iraq prosper and flourish. That is our strategic objective, and we should do everything in our power to ensure it happens, including, if need be, by extending our military presence on the ground.

More and more, Iraqi political and military figures have come out in support of extending the deadline to withdraw. But as the check comes, no one wants to be left paying the bill. The domestic political cost in Iraq of asking the U.S. to stay has left Iraq's leadership pointing fingers and passing bucks, and I saw that firsthand when I was in Iraq just last week.

This cannot be where it ends. Responsible leadership, whether in the U.S. or in Iraq, cannot sacrifice hard-earned strategic achievements for short-term political gains. We—Iraqis and Americans—must not allow that to happen.

This hearing is meant to be an opportunity for members to ask the administration what it seeks to achieve in Iraq and how it

plans to achieve it. However, our goal today should not simply be to judge up or down the plans presented before us. It should be to find that policy which will get us to where we need to go.

The United States has spent nearly a decade securing and helping to build the foundation of a prosperous and democratic Iraq. A premature withdrawal risks squandering those gains. 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 I will now yield to the gentleman from New York, the distinguished gentleman, Mr. Ackerman, former chair and now the ranking members of the committee, for 5 minutes.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I thank the chairman. Today's hearing is, indeed, a very important one. At a hearing on this same subject last November, I suggested that most Americans and most Members of Congress think that we are basically done in Iraq. Our combat troops have left Iraq last year, and the rest of our 50,000 troops are coming home at the end of this year.

As a political matter, Iraq is yesterday's problem and yesterday's news. The only problem with this view is that it is completely at odds with both reality in Iraq and the administration's plans for it.

As this committee heard last year from Assistant Secretary of State Jeffrey Feldman, American assistance is intended to "help Iraq meet its needs, stand up its economy, and cement its democratic system over the next 5 to 7 years." I will repeat what he said—5 to 7 years.

To do all of this assisting and stand upping and cementing, the U.S. mission in Iraq will be spending billions of dollars, operating five major diplomatic facilities, and employing as many as 13,000 people who will be operating a fleet of military vehicles and helicopters, and maybe engage in such diplomatic operations as "counter, rocket, artillery, and mortar notification, and neutralization response."

At that same hearing, Deputy Assistant Secretary Kahl warned that "We are now at a point where the strategic dividends of our sacrifice are within reach, as long as we take the proper steps to consolidate them." Meaning what? He said, "The long-term strategic partnership with Iraq, based on our mutual interest and mutual respect."

Secretary Feldman emphasized essentially the same point, noting that "The strategic importance of this moment cannot be overemphasized." I thought then that we had a major problem. I am now convinced that we have a total disconnect.

While the administration is planning for an Iraq that is going to be continuing its recovery and reconstruction with the aid of a multi-billion dollar American presence, the public and Congress aren't just moving swiftly to the exits on this, they have actually left the building.

If there is one lesson the Obama administration can't seem to learn is it has to be—that nothing explains itself, and nothing sells itself. If the administration thought last year that it was vital to our national security interest to spend billions of dollars over the next 5 to 7 years to establish a strategic partnership with Iraq, then a vastly more robust effort to sell this policy to the Congress and the American people was necessary.

With all due respect to our distinguished witnesses—and they are, indeed, distinguished—this panel at this time will simply not be enough.

Personally, I would prefer that we do not repeat our dismal performance in Afghanistan, where after driving out the Soviets, and then driving out the Taliban, we, as a nation, abandoned our prior allies to their fates. It was short-sighted and produced exactly the bad results that were anticipated at that time.

Now it looks like we are going to make the very same mistake in Iraq. All the blood, all the treasure, and all the national trauma, and where are we? We are on our way, at the very moment when a smaller, smarter investment would finally give us some hope of salvaging some foreign policy benefit, from the horribly misbegotten war in Iraq, but the administration is going to have to sell a lot of members on an outgoing effort that those members do not want, and they don't believe we need, and that they have been counting the days until it finished.

The collision of our expectations and the administration's policy is not going to be pretty. And with that, Mr. Chairman, I would yield back my time.

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

I think the two votes have started on the floor, although I didn't hear bells go off. But we can probably get through the introductions at least before we go over for votes. Two votes? Two ballots, okay.

And we will begin with the Ambassador, Ambassador Patricia M. Haslach. I have been told it rhymes with a very popular insurance company commercial, but I am not going to do my imitation, but that is the correct pronunciation? Excellent. And she currently serves as the State Department's coordinator for Iraq transition in the Office of the Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources.

In this capacity, she is responsible for coordinating all State Department-Washington aspects of the U.S. transition from military to civilian operations in Iraq, working closely with our Ambassador to Iraq, James Jeffrey, whom we spent considerable time with when we were there, the U.S. military, and other U.S. Government departments and agencies.

Ambassador Haslach has previously served as deputy coordinator for diplomacy for the U.S. Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative, assistant chief of mission for assistance transition at the U.S. Embassy-Baghdad, director of the Office of Afghanistan, Ambassador to the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum, APEC, the U.S. Ambassador to the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Ambassador Haslach received her M.A. in International Affairs from Columbia University, and her B.A. from Gonzaga University, and we appreciate you being here this afternoon.

And I will introduce the other two witnesses. Secondly—I have been informed that we actually have 5 minutes to go on the vote, in which case we will save the introduction of the next two witnesses until we come back.

So we are in recess here briefly, and we will be back as soon as the votes are over. We are in recess.

[Recess.]

Mr. CHABOT. The committee will be back in order.

I am going to go on with the introductions now. I think next we had Dr. Colin Kahl, who currently serves as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Middle East. Dr. Kahl is on a 3-year public service leave from Georgetown University, where is a professor in the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service.

Prior to joining the Defense Department, he was a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security, and served as coordinator for the Obama campaign's Iraq Policy Expert Group. In 2005/2006, he was a Council on Foreign Relations fellow, working at the Department of Defense on counterinsurgency, counterterrorism and stability operations.

He received his Ph.D. in Political Science from Columbia University, and his B.A. in Political Science from the University of Michigan.

And we welcome both of you here.

And last, but not least, is Christopher D. Crowley, who currently serves as the Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Middle East, from 2007 to 2010. Prior to this assignment, he was USAID mission director in Iraq. A career minister in the Senior Foreign Service, Mr. Crowley joined USAID in 1971 as an assistant area development advisor in Vietnam. He has since served as director of USAID's regional mission for Central Asia, director of the program office in USAID-India, and deputy mission director in Egypt.

In 1994, following the Oslo Accords, Mr. Crowley became the first mission director for the West Bank and Gaza. Mr. Crowley holds a bachelor of science degree in Physical Sciences from The Ohio State University, a master's degree in International Relations from the University of Pennsylvania, and a master's degree in public administration from The John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

And we welcome all three of you here this afternoon. And, as you know, we operate under the 5-minute rule, so if you could keep your remarks to that time. There is a lighting device on the table that will warn you. When the red light comes on, that is—your time has concluded. And then, we will ask questions for the same period of time.

And without further ado, we will, again, welcome you, Ms. Haslach.

STATEMENT OF MS. PATRICIA M. HASLACH, IRAQ TRANSITION COORDINATOR, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Ambassador HASLACH. Thank you, Chairman Chabot, Representative Ackerman, and distinguished committee members.

Thank you for holding this hearing and inviting me to appear before you today to discuss the issues facing Iraq, and the challenges associated with the United States' transition from a military-led to a civilian-led presence.

I would like to take this time to submit our joint written testimony for the record.

We have significant national interests in Iraq that require the continuation of strong U.S. support to ensure that we do not lose the fragile progress that has been achieved through tremendous sacrifice. We face a critical moment that will determine whether we achieve our goal of a sovereign, stable, and self-reliant Iraq.

We must recognize that the ripples of Iraq's success also extend beyond Iraq and the United States. Iraq is poised to become a political and economic leader in the Middle East region. As the Middle East faces steep challenges and an unknown future, Iraq must take center stage as a beacon of democracy and an anchor of U.S. support for the region.

Countries in the region and around the world look to our efforts in Iraq to assess the sincerity with which we approach the Arab world, and the people of the Middle East and North Africa look to Iraq as an example of what is possible in the region—a democracy whose government is elected by the people and whose purpose is to serve the people.

The transition that we are executing in Iraq is vital to our national interest. To pursue and strengthen these interests, we must strengthen our long-term partnership with the Government of Iraq and the Iraqi people. The Strategic Framework Agreement—an agreement signed between the United States and Iraq—serves as the framework and road map in building these bilateral ties.

In the Government of Iraq, we have found determined partners who are committed to the shared vision. Prime Minister Maliki and other Iraqi leaders consider the agreement to be the foundation of U.S. and Iraqi relations. With the strong support from the Iraqis, we look forward to building a long-term partnership that will strengthen Iraq, secure the national interests of both countries, and provide stability to the region.

The time is right for this transition. The security situation, while still a concern, continues to improve, providing an opening through which the people of Iraq can focus not on fear of violence, but on the prospects of rebuilding a strong economy and forming a government that is more efficient, less corrupt, and committed to improving the nation. The people of Iraq are eager to build a strong Iraq, and we must be there to support them.

What the State Department and our partners around the interagency are trying to accomplish with this transition is at the forefront of diplomacy. Its success will not only determine the fate of an emerging friend and ally, but will shape the future of U.S. engagements in the Middle East and in conflict and post-conflict areas around the world.

This transition is one of the most important international endeavors that the United States is undertaking, and its success or failure will have global implications. We cannot fail.

We will do this always mindful of the costs it requires the American people to bear. The United States has sacrificed much to reach this critical moment. Now is not the time to hesitate or to change course. We are in mid-stride and must maintain our determination and momentum to secure our footing and our direction.

The transition that we are implementing now began years ago, and it is critical that we follow through. The strategy that we will continue to pursue is the best balance between what is necessary to achieve our interests and what we can honestly call upon the American people to support.

It is because of the tremendous sacrifice that Americans have made in Iraq that we must continue our critical missions there. And through the historic Strategic Framework Agreement made be-

tween the United States and Iraq, we find that our two countries, who for years clashed as adversaries, now share a common goal—a sovereign and prosperous Iraq that is a strong ally of the United States, and is committed to and capable of ensuring security, providing services, and addressing the will of the Iraqi people. Now is the time to work together to achieve that goal.

In closing, I would like to thank Dr. Kahl and Mr. Crowley and their staffs, Ambassador Jeffrey and his Embassy, General Austin and his troops, and the many offices and bureaus throughout the Department of State, and other U.S. departments and agencies, that are involved in this transition.

Planning and implementing this transition has required the tireless efforts of our top men and women, many of them risking their lives to ensure that everything we have been fighting and working for over the last decade is not lost.

Thank you again for this opportunity to appear before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you, Madam Ambassador.

Dr. Kahl, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF COLIN KAHL, PH.D., DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR THE MIDDLE EAST, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Mr. KAHL. Thank you. Chairman Chabot, Representative Ackerman, and distinguished committee members, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the issues and challenges associated with the United States transition from a military- to a civilian-led effort in Iraq.

Ambassador Haslach has discussed the overall U.S. policy with regard to transition, so I will focus on the security situation in Iraq, which is enabling our responsible drawdown, and then say a few words about our support—of the support from the Defense Department providing to the State Department to help set them up for success.

I know members have concerns about the readiness of the Iraqi Government to provide security in Iraq as U.S. forces draw down between now and December 2011 in compliance with the U.S.-Iraq security agreement. Indeed, terrorist and militia attacks continue to pose a threat.

In mid-May, for example, an attack consisting of three coordinated car bombs in Kirkuk targeted Iraqi policemen and killed over two dozen people. And, on May 22, al-Qaeda in Iraq conducted a series of coordinated attacks in Baghdad that left 14 dead and dozens wounded.

Iraq still faces dangerous and determined enemies, but it is important to emphasize that these enemies do not have the support of the Iraqi people, and these attacks have not sparked a return to widespread insurgency or communal civil war. Moreover, despite these recent attacks, the underlying security situation remains strong, with attack levels remaining near their lowest levels of the entire war for the last 2 years.

This is particularly remarkable considering that the Iraqi security forces have assumed primary responsibility for security for the

entire country, and our U.S. force numbers have declined from roughly 144,000 when the Obama administration came into office in January 2009 to roughly 47,000 today.

Since January 1, 2009, the Iraqi security forces have been in the lead on security operations—a role that they have more capably embraced with each passing month. On September 1st of last year, we made the transition from Operation Iraqi Freedom to Operation New Dawn and drew down to below 50,000 U.S. troops, fulfilling President Obama's commitment to end the combat mission in Iraq and further cementing the Iraqis' lead security role.

While the United States continues to provides vital support to the Iraqi security forces, including training, equipping, mentoring, advising, and providing certain critical technical enablers, we need to be clear that the Iraqis are very much in charge, and they simply no longer need such large numbers of U.S. forces to help them keep the violence in check.

The Iraqi security forces have also remained professional, despite the prolonged period of uncertainty associated with Iraq's government formation negotiations. Indeed, it remains unclear when the Iraqis will name a minister of defense or minister of interior. General Austin and Ambassador Jeffrey continue to engage Prime Minister Maliki and other Iraqi leaders to emphasize the importance of reaching finality on this issue.

Beyond our continuing efforts to build the Iraqi security forces and draw down our forces, the Department of Defense and other agencies and offices have also undertaken unprecedented levels of coordination and planning for the transition in Iraq. DoD has an excellent working relationship with the State Department, and we are working together at all levels to achieve a successful transition.

As one would expect with a transition of this scope and complexity, challenges exist, but rest assured that DoD is doing everything it can to help the State Department achieve success. To facilitate the whole of government coordination, in November of last year DoD embedded a staff officer within the transition team in State to serve as a liaison and work day-to-day issues.

DoD and State have also established an ad hoc senior executive steering group for coordination and synchronization. This group is co-chaired at the deputy assistant secretary level and meets biweekly to review status and progress of the eight subordinate functional areas—supply chain, equipment, contracting, medical, facilities and construction, information technology, security, and aviation.

Additionally, to expeditiously respond to requests for equipment, a combined Office of Secretary of Defense/Joint Staff equipping board was established in early January 2011. The process consists of working-level representatives from all the services, joint staff, and OSD, which feeds recommendations for sourcing of equipment to the General Officer/Flag Officer Board, chaired by the Joint Staff, JFOR, for approval.

Currently, in Iraq, a State and DoD team has been established in each of the remaining locations to address practical solutions to issues resulting from the downsizing of the site footprint. The transition of these sites is not a turn-key operation, and each presents unique challenges.

For example, each team needs to establish new perimeters and move T-walls, resite and move containerized housing units, reroute utilities, and, where needed, undertake general site preparation. DoD will also provide State a number of specific functions on a reimbursable basis. For example, Bobcat 4 will be retained to provide general base operation and life support.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize that our continued engagement with Iraq remains vital. We are now at the point where the strategic dividends of our tremendous sacrifices and huge investments in Iraq are within reach, as long as we take the proper steps to consolidate them. A long-term strategic partnership with Iraq, based on mutual interest and mutual respect, continues to present many advantages to the United States.

Recent turmoil in the broader Middle East highlights the importance of active U.S. engagement and shoring up our relations with our key regional partners. DoD strongly believes we must remain focused on Iraq in order to advance our broader regional objectives of peace, prosperity, and security.

Thank you.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much.

Mr. Crowley, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF MR. CHRISTOPHER CROWLEY, SENIOR DEPUTY ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST BUREAU, U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. CROWLEY. Thank you. Chairman Chabot, Ranking Member Ackerman, honorable members of the committee, thank you for holding this hearing and inviting me to appear before you today to discuss the U.S. Agency for International Development's role in the transition from a military-led to a civilian-led presence.

USAID has played a major role in the U.S. Government's civilian response to Iraqi economic and social needs since 2003, and will continue to do so. The situation in Iraq has dramatically improved over the past few years, but Iraq is still very much a post-conflict developing country facing considerable development, human resource, and fiscal challenges.

The reduction in violence has created the breathing room for Iraqis to begin building their democracy, restoring public institutions, and creating conditions for private sector-led growth. But continued support is required to further nurture Iraq's fledgling democracy and improve its ability to manage its own wealth.

USAID has been supporting overall USG efforts in Iraq since 2003. The primary objective then was to restore essential infrastructure and services. Beginning in 2007, USAID shifted much of its resources to a stabilization program, to complement the military and civilian surge which began at that time. This program focused on community stabilization and administering quick response funds to the joint civilian-military provincial reconstruction teams.

USAID support is currently aligned with the Strategic Framework Agreement, which outlines the political, economic, and security cooperation between the United States and Iraq. The agreement focuses on sustainable development programs in several sectors and is characterized by increasing levels of host country ownership of the costs of these programs.

Mr. Chairman, the key challenge ahead for the Iraqi Government will be in security, essential services, economic growth, and strengthening of institutions of democratic governance. Now is the time for Iraq to transition from the legacy of war and insurgency to one of economic opportunity and good governance.

USAID's democracy and governance programs will continue to strengthen the capabilities of Iraqi governance at the national, provincial, and local levels. And this includes Iraq's gradual transition toward a more decentralized model of decisionmaking and control of resources.

USAID will help Iraq expand its economic growth in non-oil sectors, such as agriculture, financial sector development, and small and medium enterprise. USAID will also support the health sector in Iraq by focusing on strengthening Iraqi primary health care.

We will continue to assist ethnic and religious minorities and internally displaced persons. We will also support the education sector in Iraq.

USAID is a strong and growing network of working relationships with key leaders in the public and private sectors throughout Iraq. Community action groups, provincial counsels, farmer cooperatives, all of whom have been partners or who have been trained in our programs, continue to work to improve the lives of their families and communities.

USAID has been able to adapt to changing conditions in Iraq, and fully expects to be able to adapt to circumstances as the military withdraws. We will continue our programs through our implementing partners, both American and Iraqi. This has been a major strength of our programs, both in terms of our ability to engage more directly with our beneficiaries, and as a way to project our presence more widely into the country. In this way, we are better able to monitor and evaluate the impact of our programs.

Mr. Chairman, along with the Government of Iraq, partners in the donor community, and the broader U.S. mission to Iraq, USAID will continue the engagement and commitment necessary to build on the gains that have already been achieved. USAID will be assisting the Iraqis on further developing their own abilities and resources to ensure a sovereign, stable, and self-reliance Iraq.

In closing, I would like to thank Ambassador Jeffrey, Ambassador Haslach, and their staffs, General Austin and his troops, and the many offices and bureaus throughout the Department of State, and other U.S. departments and agencies, that are involved in this transition. All have provided tremendous support to USAID and its mission.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I will be happy to answer any questions the committee may have and look forward to working with you and your congressional colleagues.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Haslach, Mr. Kahl, and Mr. Crowley follows:]

TESTIMONY OF

AMBASSADOR PATRICIA HASLACH
DEPARTMENT OF STATE IRAQ TRANSITION COORDINATOR

DR. COLIN KAHL
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

CHRISTOPHER D. CROWLEY
USAID SENIOR DEPUTY ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR

BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
JUNE 1, 2011

In the years since the fall of Saddam Hussein and the height of sectarian violence, Iraq has made remarkable progress and shows considerable promise in becoming a strong and stable ally and an important leader in the Middle East. Iraq began 2011 with a historic new government seated in Baghdad, one that forged alliances across ethnic and sectarian lines. It was a great accomplishment that honored and respected the twelve million Iraqis who embraced democracy and pushed for a better future by voting in last year's election. As with all democracies, electing leaders is only the beginning, but the formation of an inclusive government signals that Iraqis now choose to settle their differences through politics and dialogue rather than through violence.

U.S. Policy for Iraq and the Middle East

With the critical support of the U.S., there is no doubt that Iraq is stronger today than it was before; but this partnership also supports and strengthens significant U.S. national interests. A strong partnership with Iraq allows us to address many of our top national interests including consolidation of Iraq's democratic transition, counterterrorism cooperation to halt the movement of terrorists and extremists who seek to undermine political progress in Iraq and elsewhere, economic and industrial growth to stabilize global energy markets, and integration of the Middle East region into global markets to build stronger, more peaceful ties. In order to achieve these goals, President Obama, in his 2009 Camp Lejeune speech, called for an Iraq that is sovereign, stable, and self-reliant; with a government that is just, representative, and accountable; that denies support and safe haven to terrorists; is able to assume its rightful place in the community of nations; and contributes to the peace and security of the region.

We must recognize that the ripples of an Iraqi success could extend beyond its borders. Iraq is poised to become a political and economic leader in the Middle East region. Geographically, Iraq is strategically positioned between major regional players -- Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran, and Syria -- and represents a bridge between diverse communities and ethnic groups whose members have lived together in the confines of

Iraq's modern boundaries for thousands of years, including Arabs, Kurds, Christians, Turkmen and others. But, perhaps more importantly in this time of regional change, Iraq's new democracy can serve as an example of what is possible. In light of President Obama's call to support economic and political reform in the Middle East and North Africa, we must not waver in our efforts to support Iraq. The formation of a stable, sovereign, and self-reliant Iraq is vital to the emergence of a secure, open, and self-determined Middle East.

U.S. Efforts in Iraq

To pursue and strengthen our interests in the region, we must continue building a long-term partnership with the Government of Iraq (GOI) and the Iraqi people. The Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA) between the U.S. and Iraq serves as a roadmap in building these bilateral ties. Through this agreement, we have solidified our friendship with Iraq, and worked to identify and highlight the pillars on which we are building a long-term partnership.

Our commitment to the Strategic Framework Agreement sends a strong signal that our relationship with Iraq extends far beyond military support alone. The agreement focuses on seven areas of cooperation: political and diplomatic; defense and security; cultural; economic and energy; health and environment; information technology and communications; and law enforcement and judicial. In 2009, Secretary Clinton hosted Prime Minister Maliki for a Higher Coordinating Committee meeting to lay out our shared vision for this reinvigorated partnership. Ambassador Jeffrey, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Jeffrey Feltman, and other U.S. officials in Iraq work to implement this vision on a daily basis. Our partners in the interagency -- including Commerce, Energy, Justice, Transportation, and Treasury -- play a crucial role in sharing expertise. The SFA is the cornerstone of U.S. diplomatic efforts in Iraq, and its vision of partnership pervades all of our efforts and steers our future goals.

Since it was signed in November 2008, the Strategic Framework Agreement has led to a number of important successes. Through the SFA, we have supported efforts to reintegrate thousands of refugees and displaced persons; to build the capacity of government institutions and civil society; to preserve the culture and history of Iraq; and to ensure the health and security of the Iraqi people. The U.S. has also supported Iraq's efforts to strengthen relations with its neighbors and the international community as a whole. In December 2010, Vice President Biden addressed the UN Security Council and led the votes to lift Chapter VII restrictions that were placed on Iraq during the Hussein regime, giving Iraq a fresh start as it re-engages the international community.

Moving forward, we will continue to implement the SFA on a daily basis through our bilateral Joint Coordinating Committees and working groups to focus on broad strategic interests; government reform; strengthening democracy and civil society; and economic development, while also addressing some immediate needs identified by the GOI. In the Government of Iraq we have found determined partners who are committed to this shared

vision. Prime Minister Maliki and other Iraqi leaders consider the SFA to be the foundation of U.S. and Iraq relations. With this strong support from the Iraqis, we look forward to building this long-term partnership that will strengthen both countries and secure our national interests.

Current Situation in Iraq

2011 has proven to be a critical and challenging year, but we see promising signs that Iraq is turning the corner. The number of security incidents remains comparatively low. This reduction in violence is even more remarkable considering it has been maintained as the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) have assumed primary responsibility for security, and our force numbers have declined from roughly 144,000 in January 2009 to approximately 47,000 today. However, terrorist and militia attacks continue to pose a threat. In mid-May, coordinated attacks in Baghdad killed over 20 people. The Sadrist trend is taking steps to revive the Jaysh al-Mahdi, which poses a serious threat to Iraq's democratic institutions and future. Meanwhile the Iraqi people are tired of violence and support the rise of democracy. The improved security situation raises the potential for significant progress. Iraqis, for so long, worried each day about their safety and the safety of their families. Now Iraqis, though still worried about security, are listing basic services and employment at the top of their concerns. The Iraqi people have taken to the streets to call for higher quality and more consistent services and less corruption. The Iraqi people are eager to hold their government accountable, rebuild their country, and forge a strong economy. We can help.

U.S. Transition in Iraq

The Department of State, the Department of Defense (DoD), and other agencies and offices have undertaken unprecedented levels of coordination and planning for the transition in Iraq. State and DoD have an excellent working relationship and are coordinating at all levels to achieve a successful transition. As one would expect with a transition of this scope and complexity, challenges exist. DoD is committed to playing its part to ensure the transition to civilian-led operations is a success.

Achieving the shared goals and interests that the U.S. and Iraq both pursue is not guaranteed. As protests in Iraq and recent attacks in Baghdad remind us, progress and security are fragile and must be supported by a range of tools and programs. As Iraq has transitioned from a country crippled by violence to an emerging democracy with a growing economy, so have our diplomatic efforts. We have developed and plan to continue a robust level of engagement that draws upon the many skills and assets of departments and agencies throughout the U.S. government. To support U.S. interests in Iraq and pursue the shared vision laid out in the Strategic Framework Agreement, we have formed a strategy that will guide our efforts.

Broader Diplomatic Presence: Through USF-I and a network of diplomatic Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), the U.S. achieved a remarkable level of engagement with the many diverse people, cultures, and communities in each of Iraq's eighteen provinces.

This presence has been instrumental in aiding Iraqis by carrying out extraordinary security, political outreach, training, economic, and developmental assistance programs, and providing the Embassy, USF-I headquarters, and Washington with current information on events throughout Iraq. As we move ahead, it is vital that we continue to nurture the ties that we worked so hard to forge, and continue expeditionary diplomatic programs that have improved the lives of thousands of Iraqis.

Development Assistance: As laid out in the Strategic Framework Agreement, we are committed to a wide range of assistance including strengthening the Iraqi government and economy and improving the health of its citizens. U.S. government assistance through these platforms and USAID programs will emphasize strengthened provincial governance, community and civil society participation, economic reforms to expand the private sector economy, respect for the rule of law and human rights, improved delivery of key social services, preparations for future elections, and the continued return and resettlement of displaced persons.

Modernization of Iraqi Security Forces: U.S. Embassy Baghdad will continue the efforts of USF-I to develop Iraq's Security Forces, now more than 650,000 strong. The Office of Security Cooperation – Iraq (OSC-I) will form the cornerstone of the U.S.-Iraqi strategic security partnership, and will serve as the hub of both security assistance and security cooperation activities. The OSC-I will be under Chief of Mission authority and facilitate the transition from a military-led to a civilian-led mission by continuing to support ISF development and modernization. This mission will include advising, training, and equipping Iraqi forces; supporting professional military education; and planning joint military training exercises. The OSC-I represents a critical component of the normalization of the USG-GOI bilateral relationship.

Police Development Program (PDP): We need to help the Iraqis professionalize their police force, an absolutely critical component to the country's long-term stability. The U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs will oversee a continuing U.S. effort to support ongoing development of Iraqi law enforcement institutions and personnel by developing leadership capacity, enhancing civilian policing and specialized technical skills, strengthening border enforcement, and cultivating sustainable training systems. The Department of Justice is also lending its specialized expertise. The transition to a civilian-led partnership with the Iraqi Ministry of Interior will be a central element of the U.S. assistance for an improved security environment; it supports our goal of facilitating a professional, competent, and self-sufficient Ministry of Interior that provides security and stability to its citizens and is able to effectively counter terrorism and organized crime.

Information-Sharing: Counter-terrorism cooperation is the primary focus of our information-sharing mission. Current information exchange programs in Baghdad will continue, with limited information exchange at the consulates. U.S. Embassy Baghdad will also maintain operations and information liaison at various headquarters, operation centers, and intelligence fusion cells.

Logistics: To support various missions across operating locations in a difficult and non-permissive environment, U.S. Embassy Baghdad must take on many logistical functions that USF-I currently provides for its forces, PRTs, and the Embassy. These include securing sites outside of Baghdad and providing personal security details; administering the Department of Defense Logistics Civil Augmentation Program's life support contract for all U.S. personnel in Iraq; managing the supply lines for food, fuel and material, operating emergency medical facilities; and running in-country and regional air operations.

Transition and the Future

As reflected in our FY 2011 and FY 2012 budget requests, we will continue to focus on broad strategic interests; government reform; strengthening democracy and civil society; and economic development, while also addressing some immediate needs identified by the GOI. Consistent with the drawdown of U.S. forces and the stand-up of the Office of Security Cooperation, FY 2012 will represent the first year of a normalized security assistance relationship with Iraq, namely through the inaugural use of State's FMF programming in Iraq. Our use of FMF coincides with the final year of DoD's Iraq Security Forces Funding in FY2011.

We have planned for this historic transition always mindful of the costs borne by the American people to help Iraqis create a foundation for the future. Our efforts to drawdown in Iraq are a critical part of our transition to full Iraqi responsibility, in line with the President's goal of supporting an Iraq that is sovereign, stable, and self-reliant. The second part of our strategy is no less important: sustained diplomacy in support of a strategic long-term partnership between the United States and Iraq. The administration's request is designed to provide us with the resources necessary to establish and operate the diplomatic platform that will enable us to advance U.S. interests in Iraq. It represents the best balance between what is necessary to achieve our interests and what we can sincerely call upon the American people to support. I And through the historic Strategic Framework Agreement between the U.S. and Iraq, we find that our two countries, who for years clashed as adversaries, now share a common goal: a sovereign and prosperous Iraq that is a strong ally of the U.S. and is committed to and capable of ensuring security, providing services, and responding to the will of the Iraqi people. Now is the time to work together to achieve that goal.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you, Mr. Crowley. And we want to thank all three of the witnesses for their testimony here this afternoon.

And now the members here will have 5 minutes, and I will recognize myself for that purpose now, to ask questions.

The administration has developed so-called minimum essential capabilities—MEC—benchmarks, which refer to an end state in which "Iraqi security ministries, institutions, and forces can provide internal security and possess maximum foundational capabilities to defend against external threats."

In its June 2010 report to Congress on Iraq, the Department of Defense assessed that only the Iraqi navy is presently on course to fully achieve its MEC goals prior to December 2011, and Iraq will not be able to independently secure its airspace before that date. Overall, the Department of Defense has reported that the potential for the Iraqi security forces to meet and maintain performance at

minimum benchmark levels "continues to be reliant on U.S. support."

In March 2011, CENTCOM Commander, General James Mattis, said in Senate testimony that "There are going to be loose ends unless the Iraqis ask to stay and work on these—ask us to stay and work on these issues. And those loose ends would be difficult for them to overcome on their own."

And, Dr. Kahl, you mentioned one example of recent violent occurrence, and it happened to be the one—we were in Baghdad the first—this was the third time that I was in Iraq. I was there before—after the fall of Saddam but before we caught him. That was about 2003. I was back in around 2007, toward the end of the surge, and then most recently, as I say, about 1–2 weeks ago.

And the day we were in Baghdad was the day that the occurrence happened up in Kirkuk, and we met with people who had—the general whose staff had been—were some of the victims. And, of course, that is evidence of the ongoing threats to this country.

With that being the case, and everything we know at this point, how realistic is it for us to be able, under the existing plan, to pull that many troops out and basically transition from Department of Defense to State? Is the State Department up for that task? Is there any precedent for anything on this scale? And, you know, what do you think the committee should know about that?

Mr. KAHL. You know, it is our assessment that the Iraqi security forces will be—have pretty good capabilities in terms of internal defense. We have spent billions of dollars and many years building up a very capable counterinsurgency force, as well as a capable counterterrorism force.

In terms of internal defense, I think we see a few gaps that are likely to exist beyond 2011. They will have some challenges in intelligence. They will have some challenges in logistics. The bigger gaps, as you mentioned, Chairman, is the gap on external defense. Maritime they will be in pretty good shape.

As you mentioned, they are going to have significant challenges as it relates to what we call air sovereignty or air defense, and that is going to be true for a number of years. And then, they are also going to have some challenges as it relates to combined arms—that is, the ability to use their forces for conventional combat, to defend their borders against conventional adversaries.

It is important to note that, even in the absence of a continued troop presence, there will be ways for us to continue to get after these challenges, both through the Office of Security Cooperation Iraq, which will facilitate our security assistance and security cooperation programs, and through the State Department's police development program. so we will be able to continue to get after these.

Anything beyond the Office of Security Cooperation would require, under the terms of the security agreement, for the Iraqis to ask. And, as you know from your recent visit, they haven't yet asked. But the administration has been clear that, were they to ask, that we would be happy to start that conversation with them.

Mr. CHABOT. Let me get to a second question, if I can. And I am going to address this to you, if I can, Madam Ambassador. And then, if you want to follow up on anything there, you can.

I understand that the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction has initiated an audit of the police development program, and has requested an entrance conference to begin the audit. They have been told that the Department has informally taken the position that SIGIR does not have authority to audit this program, even though it is funded by the International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement Fund, which fund SIGIR has authority over under Public Law 108.106, as amended.

My view is that SIGIR has done important work on police training, which is clearly part of Iraq's reconstruction, and we will need to continue to look at this program going forward. And I also, further, think it is inappropriate for the Department to try to block SIGIR's access to information on how preparations to carry out a prospective appropriation of more than a billion dollars are proceeding.

Please let me know what you plan to do to facilitate SIGIR's ability to continue to do its work.

Ambassador HASLACH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have sought to be consistently forthcoming with our responses to all of the various requests for documents and information during the planning effort, including those from SIGIR. In fact, I worked very closely with SIGIR's employees when I was in Iraq.

We appreciate the efforts undertaken by SIGIR to perform audits and investigations of reconstruction activities in Iraq, and have provided them with requested materials that we feel fall under its mandate. As the Department engages in the significant transition from a military- to civilian-led mission in our Iraq, our assistance is also transitioning from largely reconstruction-based to technical assistance and capacity-building.

We do not read the responsibilities assigned to SIGIR in its founding statute as extending to the State Department's operations in support of our diplomatic platform in Iraq. Those audit responsibilities fall, we feel, within the purview of other oversight and audit entities such as the Government Accounting Office, the survey and investigation staff of the House Appropriations Committee, the Department of State Office of Inspector General, and the Commission on Wartime Contracting.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you. And just me conclude with a quick statement, that we have spent billions of dollars over there, and auditing those dollars and making sure that that is being spent appropriately and not wasted or ripped off by some entity is critical. So we would ask your cooperation in continuing that.

Thank you very much.

And I will now yield to the ranking member from New York, Mr. Ackerman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much. Thank you all for your testimony. Is there somebody in the administration that is in charge of selling this to the American people?

Ambassador HASLACH. Well, in my building, it is the Secretary of State.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I mean, somebody specifically who has the responsibility of explaining to the American people why we are doing this, that the American people think we have already done.

Mr. KAHL. You know, the only thing that I would add, I mean, both our Secretaries are heavily involved. It is a top priority for both Secretary Gates and Secretary Clinton. And, of course, Vice President Biden was tasked by President Obama right off the bat to lead our Government's efforts. But in terms of a government spokesperson, I mean, I guess that is in the eye of the beholder.

Mr. ACKERMAN. What you are both indicating is that there is none. And I am suggesting that there is a key problem here, because the American people thought they bought this, used it, and finished with it, and they are done with it and don't have to make any further investments.

And it seems to be not the case, and it—these kinds of things are going to be very, very difficult to do in the ensuing months, if not years, given all the givens, both realities and the political terms that we have to come to and deal with. And that is not necessarily a good thing.

This seems to be—Iraq seems to have been a marriage of convenience, and everybody seems to agree that there should be some kind of a divorce. But when? And everybody thought we were waiting for the final papers to come through, and now we seem to have some remorse about that. And maybe we are sticking around for the sake of the children, and now they are all saying we should leave, although they really mean we should stay, but we ain't staying unless they ask us, and it seems like a mess.

And I don't know how you explain that to the civilian population that is going to be asked to pay for child support.

All right. I guess I will move on to something else. Is there any war in this region, in the entire region, that we can afford to ever finally leave?

Mr. KAHL. You know, I don't want to speak outside the lane of—you know, my particular portfolio stretches from Egypt up through Iraq and around down to Yemen.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Right. Can we afford to leave Egypt? Can we afford to leave Libya? Can we afford to leave anywhere?

Mr. KAHL. I think that we have profound national interest in this part of the world, countering weapons of mass destruction, countering violent extremism, energy security, the safety and security of Israel and our other strategic partners. So I think we are heavily invested in this part of the world. We have a sizeable presence in this part of the world. We are likely to remain postured at a pretty high level, even as we drawn down from Iraq.

So I don't know whether the question is "ever," but we are——

Mr. ACKERMAN. Draw down means 5 to 7 years and billions of dollars. You start multiplying that across a region where everything is 5 to 7 years, that is going to shift the 5 to 7 years by the time we get to 6 years, and it is going to cost more billions of dollars.

I am not advocating leaving this place yet, you know, but I just want to know, because of the lack of an answer to my first question, if there is nobody in charge of selling it, nobody is going to buy it.

Mr. KAHL. Well, you know, I would say that we have made a consistent case, as the administration—the President did so again last week when he gave his big Middle East speech—of emphasizing

the importance of the long-term strategic partnership with Iraq, and that it is especially important in light of all the events with the Arab Spring.

So we have—I mean, Iraq has been so important to our national interest for 20 years that we have either been at war against Iraq or in Iraq for 20 years. So, clearly, we have made an investment.

Mr. ACKERMAN. What about a financial partnership? You are talking about billions of dollars in supporting a partner that is richer than we are in many ways. Well, not really, but they seem to have some bucks. And they are going into financial partnerships with other people, which means they are cheating on us.

Ambassador HASLACH. Well, Representative Ackerman, we have no intention of leaving Iraq. I think it was pretty clear in our opening statements—all three of us—and, in fact, we have asked for assistance——

Mr. ACKERMAN. The American people think we have left. They think we have made the political decision that we—here is the problem. You have no intention of leaving, and everybody else in the country, except those who are really finely tuned, which is a very limited audience, thinks we have already done that. And I would suggest that is a disaster of a short—an intermediate-term problem, because it ain't going to be just Iraq that is on the plate in this situation.

And somebody in the administration really has to start thinking about that long term. Even if long term only means 5 to 7 years, how do you sell a billion dollar program to people who think that they are done with the payments?

Ambassador HASLACH. Representative Ackerman, if I may, Deputy Secretary Nides will be chairing a roundtable discussion on Friday with approximately 30 presidents and CEOs of major U.S. companies to talk about the challenges and the opportunities of investing in Iraq. He will also be meeting—having a number of press interviews, along with Ambassador Jeffrey, to be making the case that Iraq is worth all of the effort and worth the long-term commitment that we have made.

Thank you.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Those people might have a financial incentive to invest in Iraq, because it might be good for their 30 or whatever companies. But the American people don't necessarily own that portfolio and aren't going to see it that way, if I could put on my public relations hat and try to understand where the American people are going to be coming from.

And I will just say it again—if you ain't got no one to sell it, you ain't got no one going to buy it. I taught English better than that.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you, Mr. Ackerman.

And the gentleman from Virginia is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome.

I wonder if you could comment—well, first of all, I should ask, what is your understanding of how much CERP funding there is in this fiscal year? For Iraq and/or for Afghanistan.

Mr. KAHL. I can't speak to Afghanistan, Congressman, because it is not in my portfolio. I believe we have requested $25 million for FY12.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Crowley, are you familiar with the CERP program?

Mr. CROWLEY. Yes, sir, I am.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Is it your understanding it is well in excess of a billion dollars?

Mr. CROWLEY. Not in Iraq at the present time it isn't.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Not in Iraq. I am just talking about CERP.

Mr. CROWLEY. No. I am not sure what the overall dimensions of it are.

Mr. CONNOLLY. You don't know what the number is.

Mr. CROWLEY. No, sir.

Mr. CONNOLLY. If it were that order of magnitude, what are the conditions on programming of that money? I mean, you work for AID. AID has all kinds of constraints and regulations and legal requirements. What are the comparable constraints on the use of and reporting of and auditing of CERP funds?

Mr. CROWLEY. Well, I know how CERP funds were used in Iraq during the period I was there. And, by and large, they were used by the military units and the provincial reconstruction teams to deal with rapid response capabilities to various economic and other issues on the ground. These are more short-term programs to respond to local situations.

USAID works in a longer term——

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Crowley, I am quite familiar with how USAID works. But would it not be of concern to you—it certainly is to me—that I agree with your—that was the original intent. But when you have that kind of intent, that is a relatively modest amount of money.

When you get to very significant sums of money, would it not—I am asking you to put on your professional hat, not your public policy hat—as a professional, would it not concern you that now we have a different management challenge when the magnitude isn't $25 million, its a billion plus.

Next door to Afghanistan—I know it is not your portfolio—but would that be of concern to you as a professional at AID?

Mr. CROWLEY. Yes, sir, it would. And I would be building in all kinds of safeguards and overlapping mechanisms in order to make sure that that money is spent appropriately.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I would, too.

Mr. Kahl, is it of any concern at all—I know it is not your portfolio, as you have pointed out—but at the Pentagon, any concern? Ever pick up anything by the water fountain?

Mr. KAHL. Congressman, I just am not going to speak to Afghanistan. It is not in my portfolio. But I would be happy to take your question.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I am asking you to speak about whether you have a concern, on behalf of the taxpayers of the United States, that we have a program—irrespective of where it is—that has now ballooned in terms of value? It is not a $25 million program, and there are only two countries we are really talking about here.

And does it concern you at all, from a management point of view—even in the theoretical realm, let us say, so you comfortable in your silo—that it has so little supervision and so little restraints

in a way that would be comparable to how we do constrain the programming of USAID money?

Mr. KAHL. I think I would disagree with your characterization that there is little accountability or little restraint. There is actually a great deal of coordination between DoD, State, and USAID, and a great deal of reporting to Congress on all of the projects that are built with CERP. SIGIR, an organization we talked about earlier, has done regular assessments of it.

I can't speak to the magnitude or the specific projects in Afghanistan, because none of us work on Afghanistan. I would encourage you to direct that to our colleagues who do, and we would be happy to take that question back.

In Iraq, there was $100 million of CERP requested in FY11. We actually didn't spend all of that money, and then, in FY12, we requested $20 million. And this is basically simply to finish off some projects in that last bit of calendar year 2011 that includes the first part of Fiscal Year 2012.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Well, for the record, I thank you for the advice. I, in fact, already took it, and I did talk to the head of SIGIR. And he would not share your confidence, I think, in the CERP program.

And, as a matter of fact, in Afghanistan, a number of people have already been fingered for, frankly, because it is a cash program, and the amounts are, relative to USAID amounts, quite substantial, that we actually have some people who, unfortunately, have yielded to temptation. And it has to do with the lack of accounting and accountability.

At any rate, I commend it to you. And since you have offered, thank you, I will take you up on it. Please do get back to me, and this committee, in terms of what constraints are in place and accountability mechanisms are in place in this growing program.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

We will go to a second round. If the gentleman has any more questions, we will get to them in just a second.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Oh, all right. What do you think about—no. [Laughter.]

Mr. CHABOT. I just have a couple extra myself, and then I will get right back to you.

Just a couple of quick questions. I assume all of the panel members would agree that it is not only in Iraq's best interest, but also in America's best interest, that we see a democratic—for the most part—Iraq prosper and flourish. I am seeing nods of assent by everyone there.

And how is it in America's best interest? I mean, I know it is an obvious question, but why is it in our best interest, at this point and beyond, not taking into consideration the fact that we have lost, you know, thousands of our men and women there, which is clear, and a lot of treasure has been spent there, or money.

But how is it in our long-term best interest that Iraq is essentially a successful country in that important and tumultuous part of the world? And I see two of you chomping at the bit.

Ambassador HASLACH. Well, we have a recent example of when Iraq was just the opposite of that, so I think it is pretty clear it is in our interest that we have a stable and democratic government

in Iraq, especially in that region surrounded by some less stable and less democratic governments. So we——

Mr. CHABOT. Yes, I know. That is the obvious. But why is it? Why, you know——

Ambassador HASLACH. Well, it is for our own security, but it is also for the security of the region. And it also is for the world's economic benefit and for the potential that Iraq, you know, has to become what it once was before—a middle-income country, a prosperous country, a stable country, a partner of ours, a partner of other democracies in the world. I think we have only to gain from Iraq being a democracy. Frankly, we have a lot to lose if they were to revert back.

Mr. CHABOT. Okay. Dr. Kahl.

Mr. KAHL. I would agree with all of that. I would add that, you know, Iraq historically has been a source of instability and an aggressor state in this part of the world. And I think it is our hope that a democratic Iraq will be a more moderate actor that we can work with in the Middle East, which is, you know, a region that is vital to our interest for all the reasons that we talked about before.

I would also point out that, given the kind of mosaic of sectarian and ethnic communities in Iraq, only a democratic system can hold that country together—that is, can lead to the types of political accommodations and mechanisms to combat extremism that will keep Iraq stable over the long term.

I mean, Saddam was able to keep a lid on instability, but Iraq wasn't stable. Iraq was a brutal dictatorship.

Iraq has gone now through a period of instability following the 2003 invasion, but it has come out of that and is now on the right trajectory. And, as President Obama said, we have an interest in continuing that trajectory. And in the context of the Arab Spring, it only magnifies all of those arguments. Especially now that we are trying to stand up and consolidate democracies in Egypt and in Tunisia and encourage reform in other parts of the world, it is even more important to get Iraq right.

Mr. CHABOT. Okay. And obviously, as I had stated in my opening statement, the United States has spent nearly a decade securing and helping to build the foundation of a prosperous and democratic Iraq. And that it—a premature withdrawal could risk squandering those gains, and that would be a failure of colossal proportions. I assume all of the members of the panel agree with that statement?

Ambassador, did you want to——

Ambassador HASLACH. Yes. This goes back to your actual first—your first question, too. I mean, we are not abandoning Iraq, and we have asked for assistance to help to continue to train their police forces. We have asked for assistance to continue to train and equip the Iraq security forces, and, in fact, we—in FY12, we have asked, under the Foreign Military Financing Program, for a substantial amount of money, which we feel is essential to help Iraq defend itself against the external threats that you were asking about before.

So, I mean, our plan is actually to stay there and to help them with this. USAID—we have already requested economic support funds to help them on the capacity-building side, fragile institu-

tions, years of instability and repression. And so we are not done, but we feel that we are well on the way to a much better situation there.

Mr. CHABOT. And I assume that the panel would agree that Iran, at least in the least 30 years or so, has been, shall we say, an unhelpful actor in that region. And if Iraq falls under their influence, or they are not able to stand up to Iran, that would be very unstable and would certainly hurt the U.S. foreign security interests around the world. Is that correct?

Okay. And I think I am seeing affirmative. Dr. Kahl, did you want to say something?

Mr. KAHL. Yes. I would only say that, you know, a strong Iraq is likely to not be a puppet dangling at the end of Iran's strings.

Mr. CHABOT. Right.

Mr. KAHL. I think that a strong Iraq that has a strategic partnership with us and has relations with all its neighbors, which is what all of Iraq's leaders want, is going to be a—you know, is going to want to maintain its sovereignty, independence, and is going to be a fiercely nationalistic place. And so I don't think the Iraqis want to be dominated by Iran, which is the most important aspect.

Mr. CHABOT. Without objection, I will grant myself 1 additional minute here to just make one final observation here in the time that I have with that 1 minute. And that is that one of the things that was a bit disturbing, although not probably something you wouldn't expect, would be the fact that the parliamentarians that we met with about whether or not there needed to be U.S. involvement beyond the end of this year, we are unwilling to make that commitment, although to a person—every one of them indicated yes, but we really can't say that publicly, because we run for office as well.

And they said that is for Maliki to say, and spokespeople for Maliki indicated, well, the parliamentarians, you know, those are the folks that you have to go to. So, and it is not unlike what we see here in Washington on occasion when some of the big issues—everybody points a finger at the other—maybe it is the administration. Maybe it is Congress. Maybe it is Democrats or Republicans, but this is an important key issue.

And the politicians in Iraq are going to have to step up to the plate as well, because for the United States to pull out by the end of this year, and turn over complete—the future of that country before they are ready, could literally, you know, have defeat out of the jaws of victory, and that is what we don't want to see here, for the United States or for the Iraqis as well.

I want to thank the panel. And, at this point, I will yield to the gentleman from Virginia, Mr. Connolly, if he has any additional questions he would like to ask.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I do. I do, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. Kahl, you indicated in my previous round of questioning that your understanding of the CERP program in Iraq was that it was $25 million?

Mr. KAHL. For the FY12, the request is for——

Mr. CONNOLLY. For FY12.

Mr. KAHL. For FY12. And it was $100 million, my understanding, for FY11, which we didn't spend all of that money.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Perhaps your staff can confirm this, but am I reading the SIGIR report right that since 2003 the total amount of CERP funding in Iraq was $3.89 billion?

Mr. KAHL. Sir, I will have to get back to you on the exact number. But we have spent a considerable amount of CERP money in Iraq since 2003.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Right. More than $25 million a year.

Mr. KAHL. Yes, Congressman. That is why I said $25 million for fiscal——

Mr. CONNOLLY. Right. I understand. I am trying to get at magnitude, Mr. Kahl. And is it your testimony that, if I understood you correctly in your answer to my previous question, that you are satisfied or you believe that we can be satisfied that all of the right accounting and transparency is in place, just as it is for USAID programming?

Mr. KAHL. What I would say is that, you know, CERP was an innovation in Iraq largely to enable our counterinsurgency operations. And that we learned along the way, frankly, and that we are better now than we were at the beginning. So it would not surprise me if, going back and looking at how the program was executed at the very beginning, you found a lot more problems with how it is executed now.

I would say that the program is more accountable, that there is better coordination, and that that money is better used now than was the case in 2004, for example. But are there no challenges? Well, every program of this size will have challenges.

Mr. CONNOLLY. No one has suggested that there were no challenges, Mr. Kahl. The question was whether you felt that there were adequate mechanisms of accountability and reporting and transparency as there sort of are with USAID programs, such that the Pentagon is satisfied.

Mr. KAHL. I feel that we are in a good place in executing CERP programs in Iraq, which is the portfolio that I cover, and I can't speak to Afghanistan.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I understand. You have made that clear; you can't speak about anything outside of your portfolio. However, certainly, since the taxpayer pays for this, it is not an unreasonable expectation that we might up here expect that what you learned in your portfolio has applicability elsewhere. Would that be a fair thing?

Mr. KAHL. It is absolutely true that the way the program is being applied in Afghanistan learned from the lessons in Iraq. But in terms of how it is being executed on the ground in Afghanistan, I can't speak to that.

Mr. CONNOLLY. All right. I look forward to having more dialogue about this, because I think CERP has grown so big that it presents very serious problems in terms of accountability and transparency. And I would love to have you submit for the record more detail about what the Pentagon learned in this time period.

As you said, we have improved and evolved. That is great. But I want to know what that is, and I also want to know how—what its applicability is to other places. Obviously, I have Afghanistan in mind, but I won't burden you with Afghanistan.

Let me ask a totally separate question real quickly. One of the things, in talking to reconstruction folks, that they suggest is that it is time we have a permanent Office of Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations, because we sort of reinvent the wheel every time something comes up. And that if we had an office centrally located with expertise, knowing the ropes in the SOPs, and so forth, and the rolodex of vendors and providers and nonprofits and everything else, that that would make us, frankly, a lot more efficient and save taxpayer dollars.

Any comments on that suggestion or observation? Mr. Crowley.

Mr. CROWLEY. Well, there is an office in the State Department that has the purpose of doing exactly that, and I think Ambassador Haslach would be better positioned to comment on it. And USAID works closely with that office in situations where these kinds of responses are required.

We also have our own Office of Transition Initiatives, which is itself built around providing responses to these kinds of situations, but it works hand in hand with SERS, which is the State Department office that is tasked with that responsibility. So——

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Chairman, I know we are running—would you indulge just to allow Ms. Haslach to be able to respond?

Mr. CHABOT. The gentleman is recognized for 1 additional minute.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I thank the chairman.

Ambassador HASLACH. Mr. Crowley is right. There is an office at the State Department that is tasked with exactly what you are talking about. And, in fact, under the Quadrennial—the QDDR, the Quadrennial Development and Diplomacy Review, in fact, there are a number of suggestions on how that office can be strengthened to fulfill the role you are recommending.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Okay. Again, if you wanted to get back for the record, anything, that would be great. Thank you so much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your indulgence.

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

Would the gentleman from Pennsylvania—we are ready to wrap up the hearing. So you are welcome to ask questions, if you have some questions, Tom.

Mr. MARINO. I apologize for being late, and I have no questions.

Mr. CHABOT. No problem. Okay. Well, thank you very much.

And if there is no further business to come before the committee, we want to thank the panel for their testimony and answering our questions here this afternoon. And without objection, all members will have 5 minutes—or, excuse me, 5 days to submit questions or statements to the record.

And if there is no further business to come before the committee, we are adjourned.

Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 4:28 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

May 25, 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: Wednesday, June 1, 2011

TIME: 2:30 p.m.

SUBJECT: Preserving Progress: Transitioning Authority and Implementing the Strategic Framework in Iraq, Part 1

WITNESSES: Patricia M. Haslach
Iraq Transition Coordinator
U.S. Department of State

Christopher Crowley
Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Middle East Bureau
U.S. Agency for International Development

Colin Kahl, Ph.D.
Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Middle East
U.S. Department of Defense

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 June 12th **Date** _____ **Room** Rayburn 2172

Starting Time 2:30 **Ending Time** 4:30

Recesses [ ] (2:50 to 3:45) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____)

~~Steve Chabot~~
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 & Implementing the Strategic Framework in Iraq

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Gary Ackerman, Steve Chabot, Gerald E Connolly, Tom Marino, Joe Wilson

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 4:30

Subcommittee Staff Director

Committee Members (Updated 1/25/2011)

6

- [x] Ackerman, Gary L.
- [ ] Bass, Karen
- [ ] Berman, Howard L.
- [ ] Bilirakis, Gus
- [ ] Buerkle, Ann Marie
- [ ] Burton, Dan
- [ ] Cardoza, Dennis
- [ ] Carnahan, Russ
- [x] Chabot, Steve
- [ ] Chandler, Ben
- [ ] Cicilline, David
- [x] Connolly, Gerald E.
- [ ] Deutch, Ted
- [ ] Duncan, Jeff
- [ ] Ellmers, Renee
- [ ] Engel, Eliot L.
- [ ] Faleomavaega, Eni F. H.
- [ ] Fortenberry, Jeff
- [ ] Gallegly, Elton
- [ ] Griffin, Tim
- [ ] Higgins, Brian
- [ ] Johnson, Bill
- [ ] Keating, William
- [ ] Kelly, Mike
- [ ] Mack, Connie
- [ ] Manzullo, Donald A
- [x] Marino, Tom
- [ ] McCaul, Michael T.
- [ ] Meeks, Gregory W.
- [ ] Murphy, Christopher S.
- [ ] Paul, Ron
- [ ] Payne, Donald M.
- [ ] Pence, Mike
- [ ] Poe, Ted
- [ ] Rivera, David
- [ ] Rohrabacher, Dana
- [ ] Ros-Lehtinen, Ileana
- [ ] Royce, Edward R.
- [ ] Schmidt, Jean
- [ ] Schwartz, Allyson Y.
- [ ] Sherman, Brad
- [ ] Sires, Albio
- [ ] Smith, Christopher H.
- [ ] Wilson, Frederica
- [x] Wilson, Joe

Sched for 2 30
Recess at 2 55
Reconvene 345
Adjourn 430